MAN, MYTH & MAGIC

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown

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MAN,
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VOLUME 2

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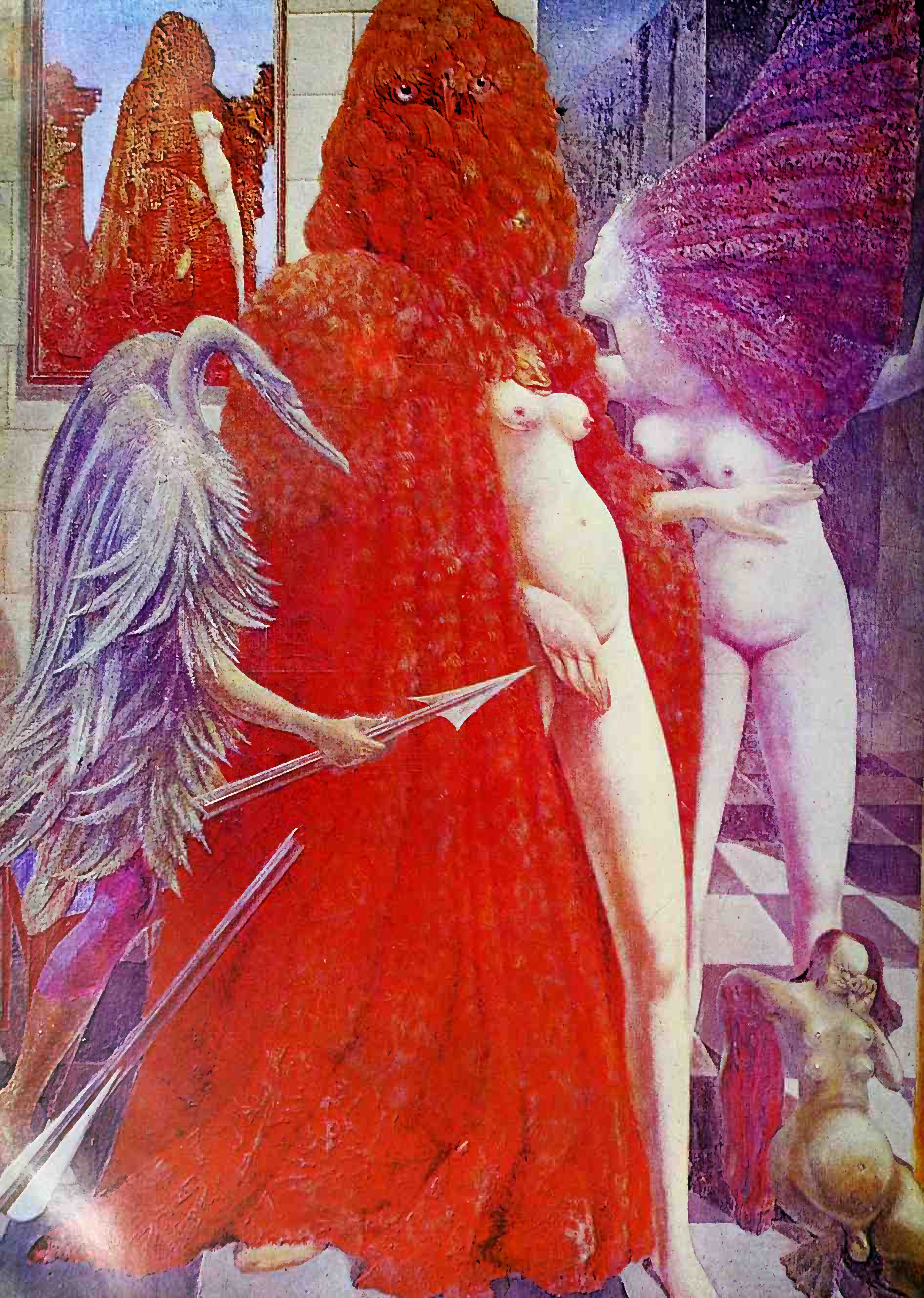

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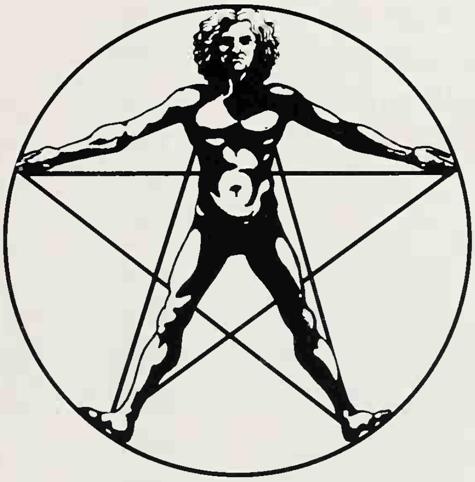

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown

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Richard Cavendish

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Richard Cavendish and Brian Innes

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Frontispiece: Max Ernst's painting, *The Robing of the Bride*, combines mankind's age-old envy of the bird's flight with the horror of the unnatural mingling of human and non-human

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'A greenish substance like tenuous seaweed began to invade the room . . .' Experiences of atavism, the reappearance of animal characteristics from long ago, are rare and intensely horrifying

ATAVISM

ATAVISM MEANS reversion to an earlier type. Applied to human beings, atavism is the re-emergence of the characteristics of a certain ancestor or ancestors after a lapse of what may be many generations. The implication is nearly always of something unwholesome and frightening, and the idea has been used in many horror stories.

In a broader sense, the term atavism is used by occultists to mean the reappearance of characteristics which come from so long ago that they constitute reincarnations, or fresh embodiments, of pre-human consciousness; things which come from the time of creatures half man and half beast. Atavisms of this kind are very rare and intensely horrific. Nor do they always emerge spontaneously.

Dance of the Jackal

Frederick Kaigh in his book *Witchcraft and Magic of Africa* describes a ritual performed by an African witch-doctor. The witch-doctor danced in frenzy to the rhythm of drums and emitted high-pitched screams, like a jackal in rut. His dance reached a climax of ecstasy and he fell to the ground, where he remained inert as a log. Then a young couple leapt into the clearing over the heads of the drummers and swaying watchers. After repeated gyrations and whirlings, during which they also emitted piercing cries, a subtle change came over them. Kaigh says that he witnessed the actual transformation of their bodies into the likeness of jackals. The rite terminated in repeated copulations, well beyond human capacity even under the stimulus of aphrodisiacs.

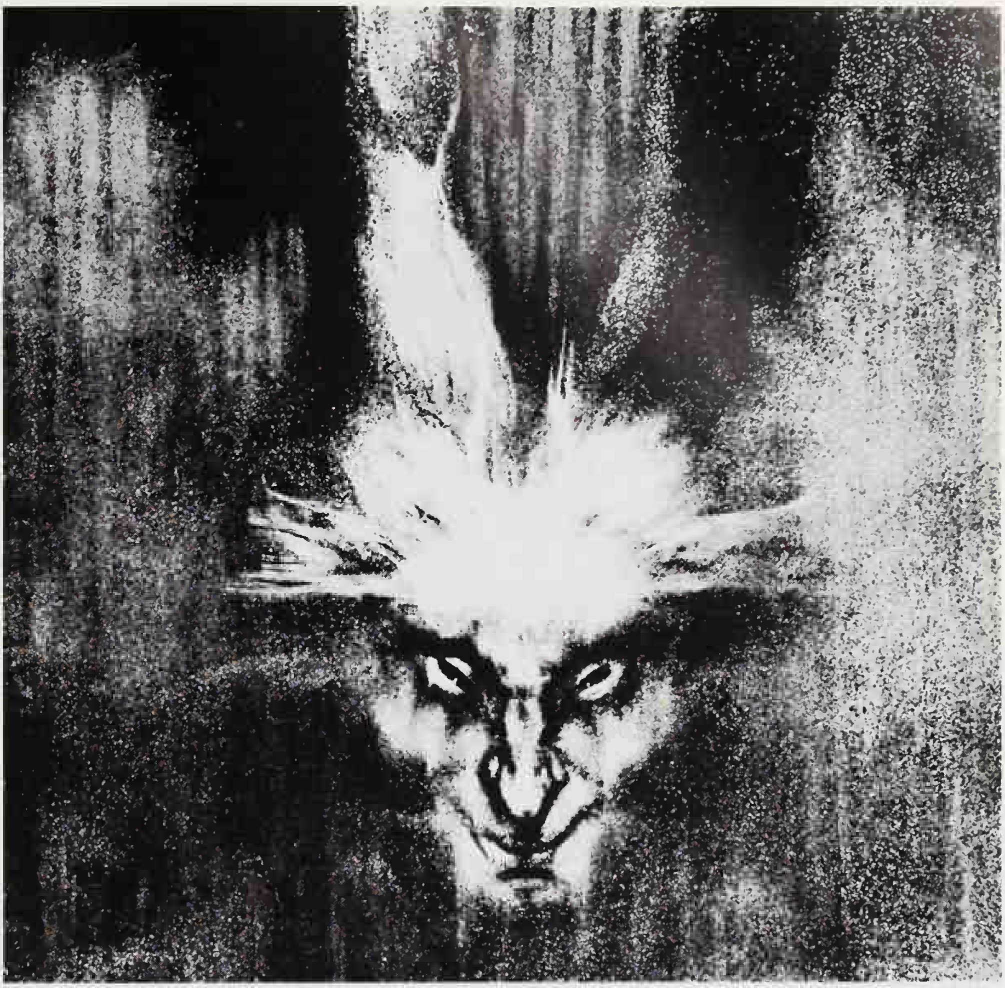
Kaigh explained this demonstration of atavism as the result of a spiritual ecstasy combined with powerful magic on the part of the witch-doctor, whose projected 'double' or astral body had obsessed the two dancers.

The double usually assumes the true form of its original. In other words, the theory is that the witch-doctor was the apparently human embodiment of an animal soul. Its temporary incarnation in the bodies of the dancers was the signal for the entire gathering to engage in a communal orgy.

Woman into Wolf

It is possible that long ago in ancient Egypt, certain similar processes of transformation were known to the priest-magicians. Their identification of themselves with powers represented by animals suggests a knowledge of, and traffic with, atavistic energies that lie buried in man's subconscious as a legacy of his pre-human ancestry.

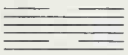
William Seabrook, an American journalist and collector of occult experiences, stumbled on a curious case of atavism. He and a friend had been experimenting with an ancient system of Chinese magic called the I Ching, or *The Book of Changes*. The I Ching contains, among other things, 64 hexagrams. (See I CHING)



Above **A powerful painting by Austin Spare whose work depicts the atavistic urges buried deep in the mind**

If one of these hexagrams is visualized and mentally impressed upon the surface of an imaginary door it admits the practitioner, if he is sufficiently competent to open the door imaginatively, to a part of the astral world which is represented by the hexagram.

Nothing much occurred when Seabrook and his friend tried the experiment, although they sometimes persevered for several hours in an effort to open the 'door' and pass through it. One evening, however, a woman of their acquaintance said she wanted to try. She knelt down, resting the weight of her body on her heels. She then selected a figure, which happened to be a hexagram called *Ko*, which looks like this:



The woman closed her eyes and mentally superimposed the hexagram on the 'door'. Nothing happened for a very long time. Then, quite abruptly, she saw the 'door' swing open and she began to describe what was happening to her as she projected her consciousness across the threshold.

She entered a region of snow; flurries of it swept all about her. It was some time before she realized with a shock that she was loping swiftly over a desolate and infinite tract of ice. What had begun innocently, almost as a game, turned into a dangerous attempt to rescue her. Her features underwent a subtle and revolting change, her lips drooled foam, her speech faded and ceased altogether. From her throat issued a hideous baying sound that rose and fell.

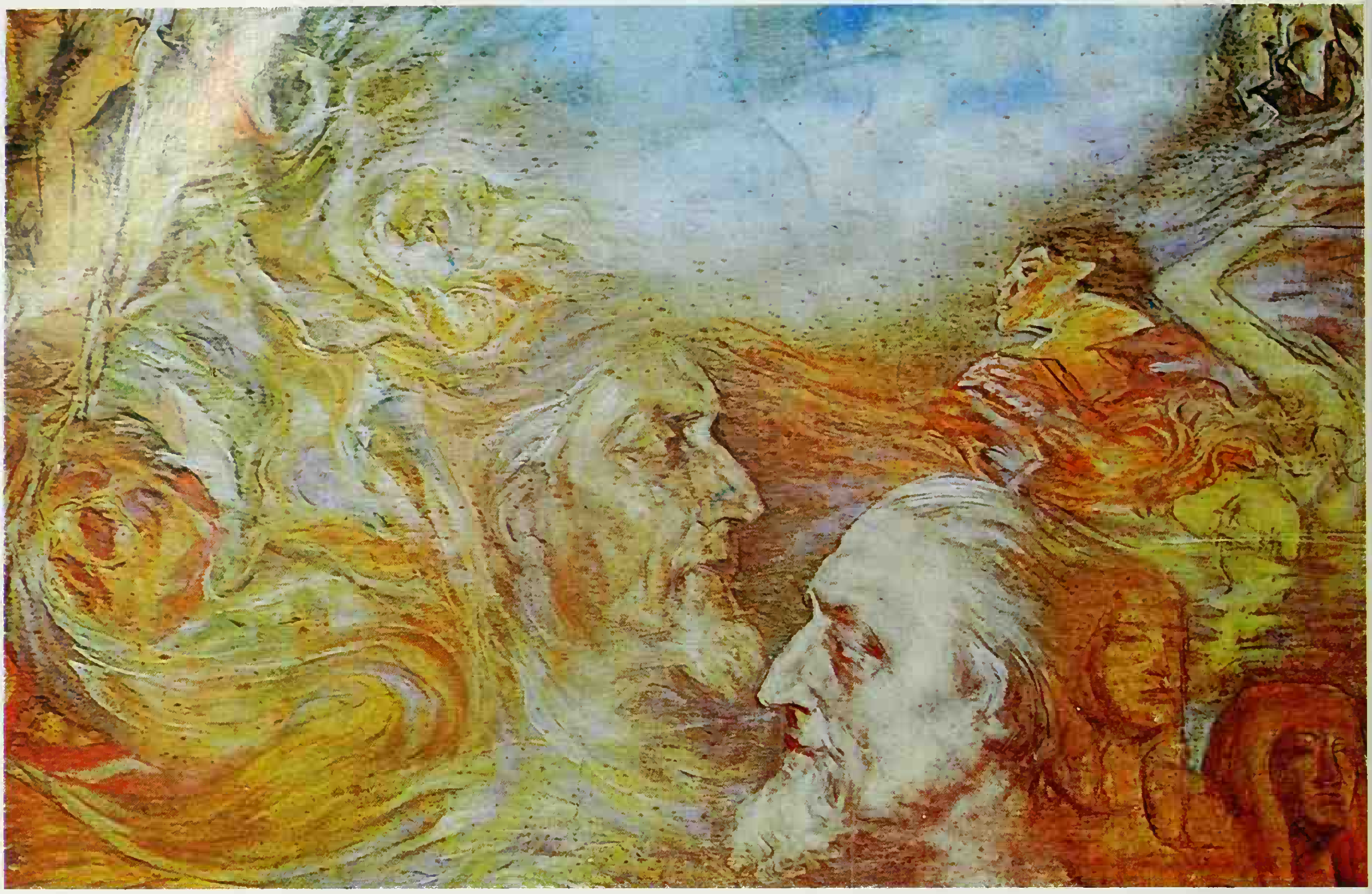
In trying to recall the woman's spirit her friends shook her, called her name, and slapped her face. She snarled and would have savaged them if the cramped posture she had maintained for so long had not paralysed her limbs. It was with great effort that her resistance was overcome. As she calmed down, her face lost its wolfish expression and assumed once more its usual appearance.

It is interesting that the hexagram *Ko* denotes transformation, or changing 'as the leopard does when he changes his spots, or the tiger his stripes'.

It transpired some time after the event that, as a small child, the woman had seen wolves speeding over the snow in Russia, and had felt an intense desire to run with them. Years later, during the experiment, her desire had been realized.

Terror in the Mist

A formula for sounding these remote depths of the mind was worked out by Austin Osman Spare. Spare was an artist who had been a member of an occult group called the Golden Dawn, which flourished in the early years of this century and which taught the 'assumption of God-forms' on the model of ancient Egyptian magic, in which the magician tries to merge his consciousness



Austin Spare used symbolic pictures to give visible form to terrifying atavistic impulses deep in the mind. He claimed that he had only to visualize one of these pictures for the atavistic desire to surge up

with that of a god, usually imagined in animal form. (See GOLDEN DAWN)

Spare's 'formula of atavistic resurgence' was based on the use of symbolic pictures, which gave a visible form to various atavistic urges and desires deep in the mind. He claimed that he had only to visualize one of these pictures for the atavistic impulse to surge up. An example which he gave was an occasion when he needed to move a heavy load of timber, with no one to help him.

Spare closed his eyes for a while and visualized a picture which symbolized a wish for the strength of tigers. Almost immediately he sensed an inner response. He then felt a tremendous upsurge of energy sweep through his body. For a moment he felt like a sapling bent by the onslaught of a mighty wind. With a great effort of will, he steadied himself and directed the force to its proper object. A great calm descended and he found himself able to carry the load easily.

On another occasion, two people pressed Spare to conjure up an atavistic spirit in visible form. He warned them of the dangers involved, explaining that these creatures exist within the mind at levels not normally in communication with the conscious mind; that it was foolish to evoke them because they embodied the atavistic urges and desires of those who would behold them. But the couple insisted. Spare again used his symbolic picture method. He closed his eyes and waited. It was not long before a greenish substance like tenuous seaweed began to invade the room, partially obscuring the objects it contained. It resembled a coiling mass of vapour, which slowly congealed into a definite shape. It gained more and more substance with each successive moment, until the terrified dabblers panicked and begged Spare to banish it. Before it faded, however, they saw a vast face peering out of the mist; the eyes of it were like pools of black and burning oil.

Spare died in 1956, in a basement flat in Brixton, in poverty and obscurity.

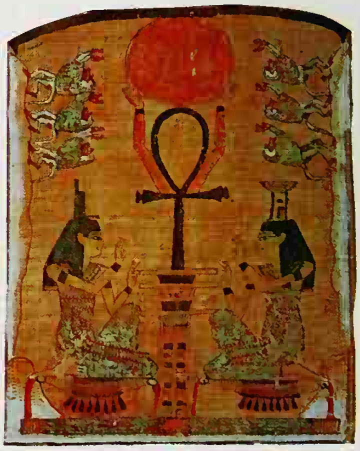
KENNETH GRANT

Ate

Greek word for 'ruin, disaster': personified as a power which so disorders a man's mind that he cannot tell right from wrong; in the *Iliad* she is the daughter of Zeus, an early example of the problem of how far God is responsible for evil; some later European writers thought of her as a demoness.

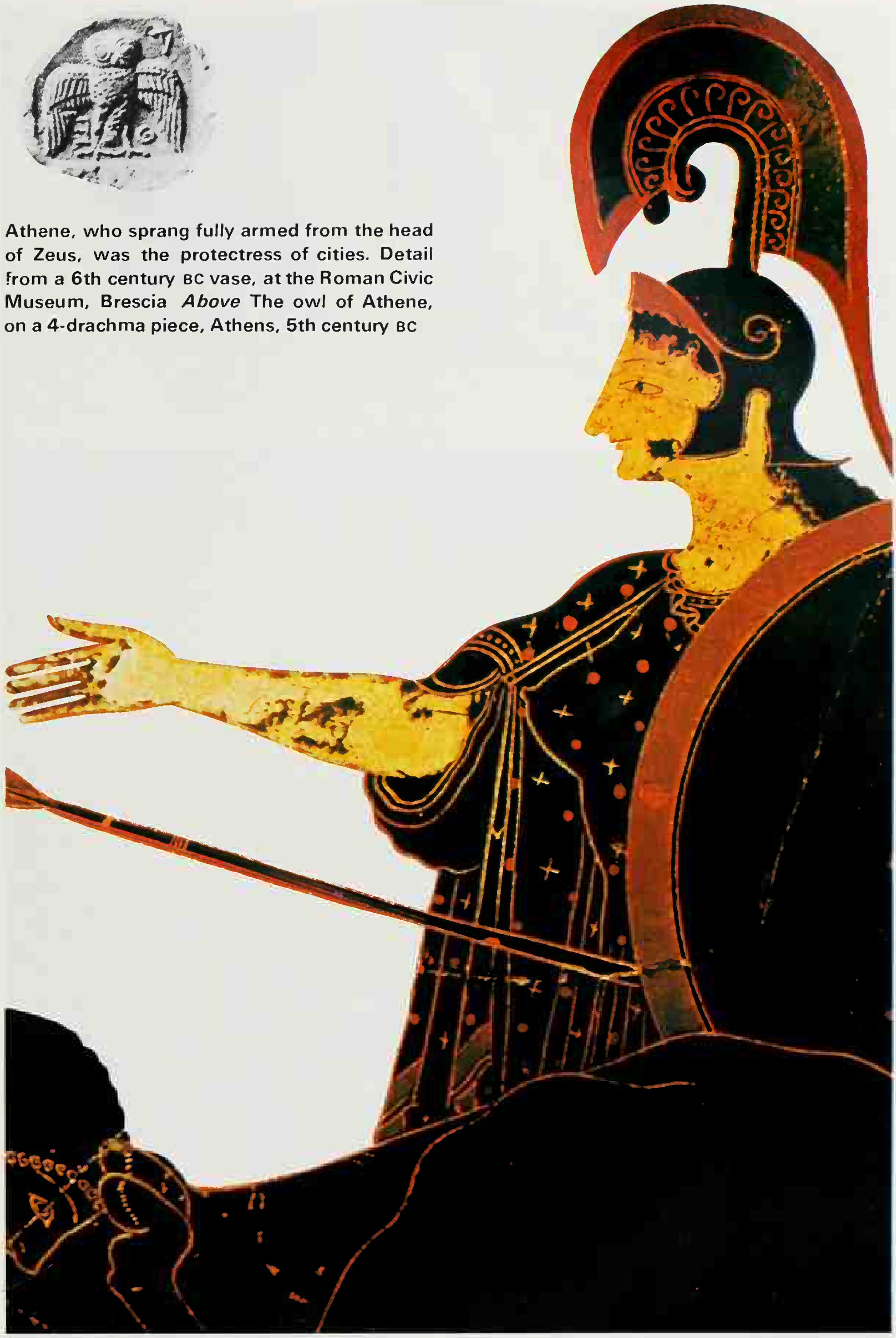
Aten

Or Aton, in Egyptian religion, the disc of the sun; in the 14th century BC Pharaoh Amenophis IV changed his name to Ikhnaton (or Akhenaten), 'pleasing to the Aten', denied the old gods and established a short-lived religion of the Aten as the only god.
See EGYPT; IKHNATON.



Michael Holford

Personified wisdom, goddess of war and bringer of victory, mother of crafts, Athene was preeminently the city goddess of Athens, the intellectual centre of Greek civilization



Athene, who sprang fully armed from the head of Zeus, was the protectress of cities. Detail from a 6th century BC vase, at the Roman Civic Museum, Brescia *Above* The owl of Athene, on a 4-drachma piece, Athens, 5th century BC

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ATHENE

THE GREEK GODDESS Athene (or Athena) was closely associated with the city of Athens, whose name in Greek is the plural form of the goddess's name; she was also called 'the Athenian', *Athenaie*. These names are not of Greek origin and the goddess was probably taken over from the earlier non-Greek population by the Hellene invaders who entered the country about 2000 BC.

In the Mycenaean period (before 1200 BC) Athene seems to have been a palace goddess, who protected kings in different districts. She was especially their protectress in war and there are artistic representations of an armed goddess who may be Athene. Direct evidence is hard to come by but this much can be inferred from her status in Homer and in classical Greek religion.

The Homeric poems (8th century BC), which look back to the heroic age of the Mycenaean civilization, preserve many memories from the centuries before Homer, and Athene is one of the most important deities in them. Her antiquity is indicated by a number of her titles which were of unknown or uncertain meaning to the Greeks themselves: Pallas, Tritogeneia, Atrytone. She is the daughter of Zeus, and he pays her markedly more love and respect than he shows to his wife Hera. She is the city goddess of Troy, but at the same time the helper of Greek heroes in battle. Other gods and goddesses have favourites whom they are prepared to whisk away from danger, but only Athene will stand beside a warrior in his chariot. Besides her spear and helmet, she carries a magic goatskin *(aegis)*, with which she flaps terror into opposing forces or courage into her own.

The more intelligible of her epithets in Homer almost all refer to her warlike qualities; *agestratos* or *ageleie* 'leader of the war-host', *egrekydoimos* 'rouser of battle', *laossoos* 'driving armies before her', *leitis* 'goddess of booty'. But she had other aspects. She was patron goddess of arts and crafts, including carpentry and weaving, and was noted for wisdom and resource.

The connections between these various functions are obscure. Wisdom and help in war probably reflect what the princelings of the Mycenaean age hoped for from her; perhaps she became the goddess of joiners and weaving-women because they looked to the palace for employment. But she remained their goddess long after the palaces fell and the princes were overthrown.

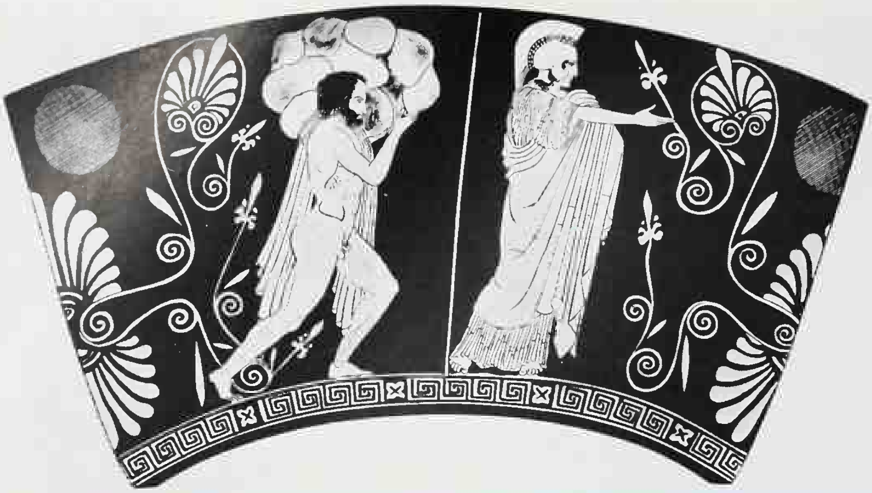
Born in Armour

According to mythology the goddess was born in full armour from the head of Zeus, which Hephaestus helpfully split with an axe. She thus had no real mother, though one was supplied by the story that Zeus married Metis, 'Resource', and swallowed

A Manly Goddess

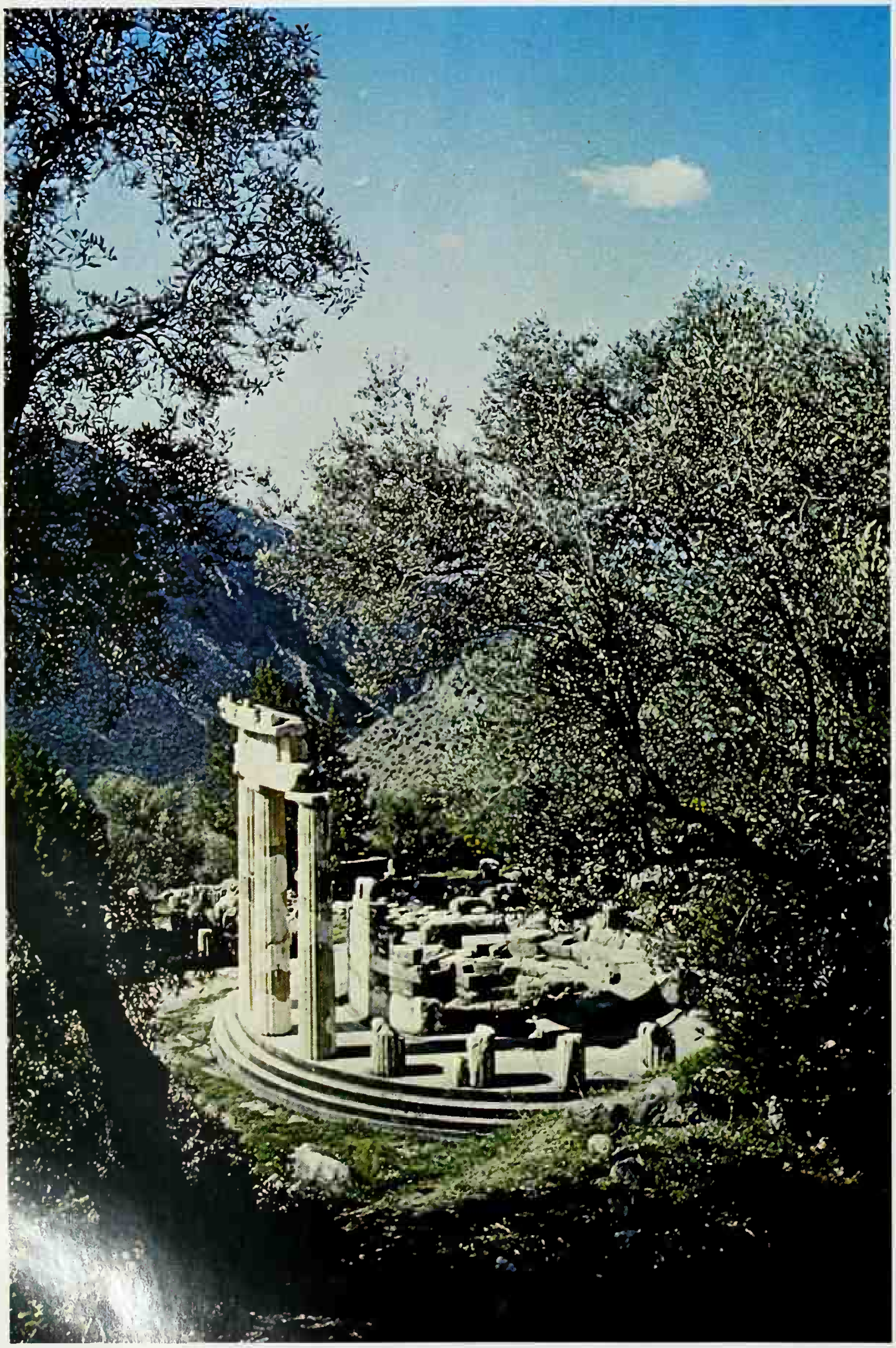
On Olympus the gods were altogether superior to the goddesses, considered collectively – superior not only in their power but also in their appeal, in the feelings they inspired among men. The chief exception to the rule was Athena, and the significant quality of Athena as a goddess was manliness. She was the virgin goddess in a world that knew no original sin, no sinfulness of sex, no Vestal Virgins. She was not even born of woman, having sprung from the head of Zeus – an insult to the whole race of women for which Hera never forgave her husband, Hera who was the complete female and whom the Greeks feared a little and did not like at all, from the days of Odysseus to the twilight of the gods.

M. I. Finley
The World of Odysseus



Mansell Collection

Left Building the Acropolis at Athens, on which stood the Parthenon, the greatest of Athene's temples _Below_ Ruins of Athene's temple at Delphi



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her before she gave birth (a motif borrowed from Zeus' own birth; see CRONUS). She had no husband either. Hephaestus, the other god of craftsmen, who was worshipped with her at Athens, might have been the obvious mate for her, but that would have implied divine children.

Athene's warlike qualities made it natural that she should be given a leading part in the overthrow of the Giants, the earthborn rebels who piled up mountains in their attempt to storm Olympus. But as she was responsible for warriors' successes, their disasters were attributed to her anger. Because Ajax the Locrian assaulted her priestess at Troy, she roused a tempest as the Greek fleet sailed home, and Ajax was drowned.

Goddess of Cities

Holy places are very tenacious of the respect in which they are held by the people. The old palaces fell but Athene remained on the citadels where they had stood. From being the goddess of the ruler she became the goddess of the city, and was given this express title in a number of places besides Athens. She was often associated in this function with a 'Zeus of the city'. Already in Homer she is the city goddess of Troy with her temple on the acropolis. So long as her wooden image, given by Zeus to the first king, remained there, the city's safety was assured; the Greeks had to steal it before their victory.

The goddess developed some secondary characteristics in different localities; at Elis, for example, she had the title Mother, and apparently a connection with childbirth. But what appears in many places, and is therefore likely to be an ancient feature, is her association with the crafts, expressed in the title Ergane, 'craftswoman'. At Athens, where ceramics was a major industry, the potters particularly enjoyed her supervision, though she was also the goddess of the whole community. Another important item in the Athenian economy was the production and sale of olive oil, and so the olive too came under the goddess's special care.

This public aspect became more and more dominant as time went on. In the 6th century BC the dictator Pisistratus made a stylish return from exile by getting a strapping girl to dress up as Athene and lead the way. Nobody can have believed it was the goddess in person, but the spectacle must have had its effect. As ruler of Athens, Pisistratus put Athene's head on the city's coins, built her a new temple on the acropolis, and made her four-yearly festival, the Great Panathenea, more splendid. This was all politics rather than piety, but it was politically worthwhile because piety was still common. For the ordinary people it represented a visible expression of the increased glory of Athens. Pisistratus was succeeded in 528 by his sons, who continued his policies. Athene's face on the coins developed a merry smile, which remained there into the following century.

The Owls of Athene

Animals that appear in holy places are liable to be taken for manifestations of divinity, and the owls of the Athenian acropolis were associated with the goddess from early times. Her epithet *glaukopis* may mean 'owl-faced'. In 480 BC the Persian invaders destroyed the sacred buildings, but the appearance of an owl put heart into the defenders, and the tables were turned in the naval battle at Salamis.

In the following decades, Athens became the most powerful city in Greece and its intellectual centre. In Aeschylus and other authors of the 5th century, Athene appears as a noble figure, embodying the city's highest ideals of justice, wisdom and moderation. At the same time rebuilding was proceeding on the acropolis in magnificent style. A huge bronze statue of the warrior goddess was set up where it could be seen miles away at sea. The old temple was replaced by a larger and finer one higher up on the crest of the hill, the incomparable Parthenon. It contained another great statue of the goddess, clad in a golden robe and holding a figure of Victory in her palm. The outside was decorated with sculptures representing Athene's birth, her dispute with the god Poseidon for control of the city, battles among gods and men, and the ceremonial procession of the Panathenea.

These proud and liberal works still proceeded after Athens became engaged in her long war with Sparta (431–404). But the aspirations that they expressed were disappointed, for this war ended in defeat and disillusion. The goddess maintained her public position to the end of paganism, honoured with priestesses, shrines and sacrifices, entitled 'Bringer of Victory'. But these municipal pieties had less and less to do with religious feeling. Already in 5th century art Athene's face had taken on an impersonal expression. The subsequent decline of the city's industries struck at the roots of her popular support; the number of private dedications to her fell off sharply after the 4th century BC.

An Intellectual Rebirth

At the same time, the traditional gods were suffering from a general loss of respect, due to the rise of scientific rationalism. But far from killing the gods, the intellectuals gave them a new lease of life, by identifying them with physical or mental realities for which divinity could be claimed. For example, Zeus the hurler of thunderbolts was for them not a sturdy male figure, but the sky.

This line of thought began in the 6th century BC, and was being applied systematically by the 4th at the latest. In Plato's time, Athene was being identified with 'mind'. The same method was embraced by Stoicism, the philosophy which exercised more influence on educated men than any other from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century AD. For the Stoics, Athene was wisdom, or virtue, or the moon.

The aim in making these identifications was to find something which could be related to the name of a god as well as to his traditional titles and myths. So Chrysippus in the 3rd century BC explained that Athene was called Athene because the mind considers *(athrein)*, and Tritogeneia because wisdom is tripartite; she was born from the head with the help of Hephaestus, the craftsman god, because wisdom comes to light by way of the voice, and arises from technical skills.

Through such devices the Greek gods remained alive, and preserved their ancient attributes. In the Orphic Hymns (probably of the 2nd to 3rd centuries AD: see ORPHEUS AND ORPHISM) Athene is laden with the accumulated attributes of 1500 years; goddess of war, destroyer of Giants, mother of arts, bringer of victory and health, personified wisdom. In a later hymn, addressed to her by the philosopher Proclus in the 5th century AD, she retains all these facets, and is accommodated to the highly abstract theological system of the Neoplatonists as well; and this artificial creature, formed as it were by sedimentation, served Proclus as a focus for his genuine piety and devotion.

The Roman Minerva

As early as the 6th century BC, a native Italian goddess Menerva was identified with Athene. In Etruscan artistic copies of Greek mythological scenes her name is written for Athene's; in Latin literature Minerva is the ordinary name for the Greek goddess.

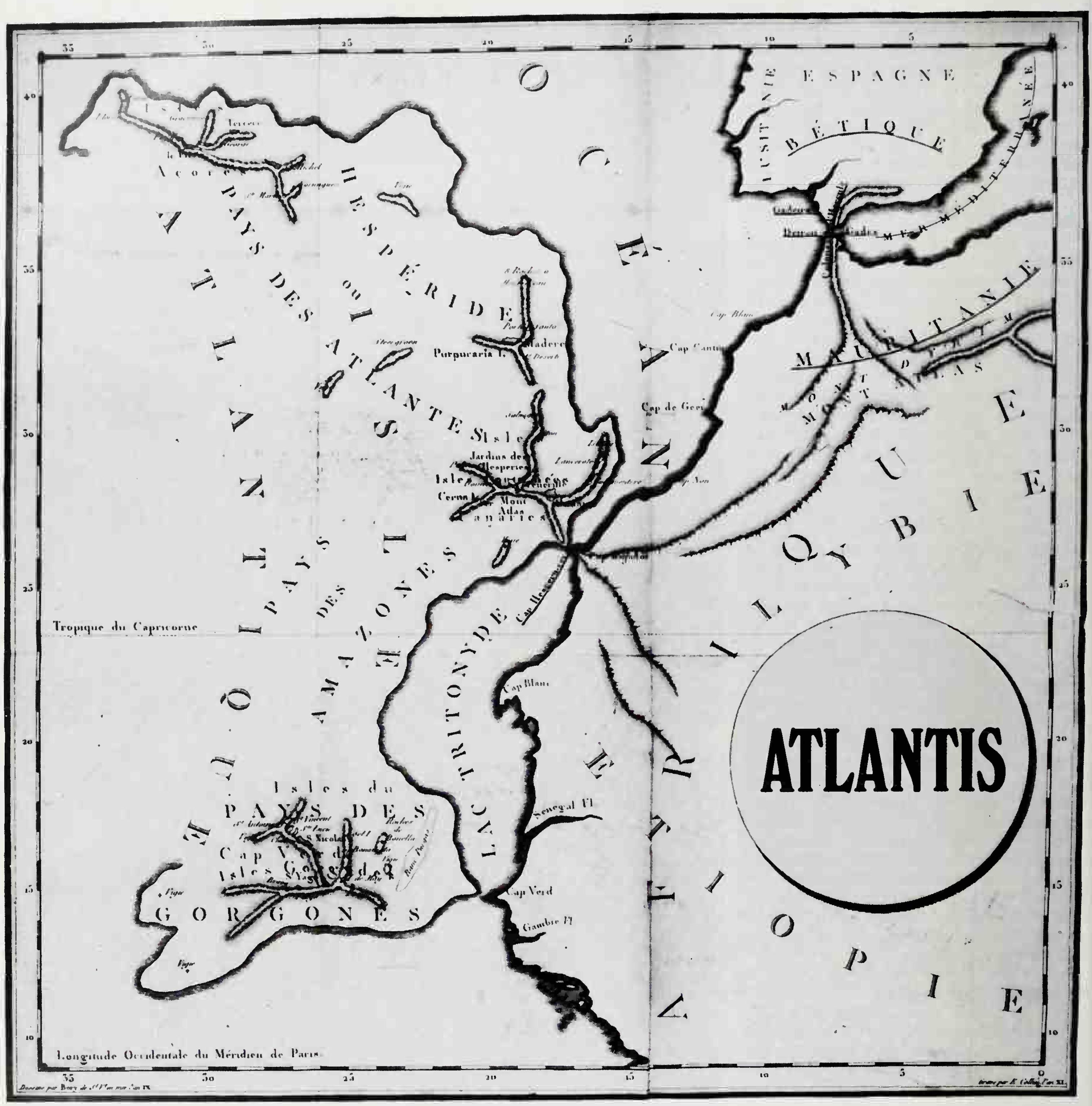
Because this identification was so early, it is hardly possible to determine Menerva's original character, though it must have resembled Athene's in some important respect. Many scholars regard her patronage of arts and crafts, which is conspicuous in historical times, as a basic attribute and the Latin proverbial phrase 'unwilling Minerva', indicating lack of inspiration, shows that she was established in the popular mind as goddess of wit and resource. Other functions of Athene were transferred to her by literary men and in official cult. The Etruscans set her up as a protecting goddess of cities, in company with Jupiter and Juno, and the Romans, when they took the south Etruscan town of Falerii in 241 BC, removed her image to Rome as the Greeks had removed Athene's from Troy. Little religious sentiment can have been involved. Roman religion was, after all, largely a mass of formalities, preserved from a pre-urban past by priestly conservatism and later by cultured antiquarianism, modified at intervals from political motives by the state.

M. L. WEST

C. M. Dixon

Statue of Minerva, the Roman equivalent of Athene, patron of arts and crafts, and goddess of wit and resource

FURTHER READING: H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (Dutton, 1959) gives an excellent brief survey of gods and myths. For the early period, M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan–Mycenaean Religion* (Lund, Sweden, 1950) is the standard work. For the classical period there is much material in volume 1 of L. R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* (Caratzas Bros., 1977, first published in Britain 1896–1909), though the discussion of the gods' natures is outdated. See also F. Altheim, *A History of Roman Religion* (Dutton, 1938).


ATLANTIS
OCÉAN
ATLANTIQUE
ESPAGNE
LUSITANIE
BÉTIQUE
MER MÉDITERRANÉE
MAURITANIE
MONT ATLAS
LYBIE
ETHIOPIE
HESPÉRIDES ou ISLES ATLANTES
PAYS DES ATLANTES
PAYS DES AMAZONES
LAC TRITONYDE
Açores
Madere
Purpuraria I.
Jardins des Hesperides
Isle Cerné
Mont Atlas
Canaries
Cap Blanc
Cap Cantin
Cap de Geer
Cap Non
Cap Bojador
Senegal Fl.
Cap Verd
Gambie Fl.
Isles du Pays des Gorgones
Cap Verd
Tropique du Capricorne
Longitude Occidentale du Méridien de Paris

The lost paradise of Atlantis has attracted romantic speculation for hundreds of years, but its true location and date have still not been finally settled

ATLANTIS was originally a great seapower which, according to the Greek philosopher Plato, launched an attack on Athens and Egypt. During the war, Atlantis was swallowed up in a natural cataclysm in the space of a day and a night, this same cataclysm also annihilating the Athenian army. The only written account of Atlantis is that which appears in Plato. All later writings about Atlantis – and they are innumerable – are commentaries, expansions or fantasies derived from Plato's account. Plato was an Athenian, born about 427 BC and dying in 348 BC. His description of Atlantis appears in two of his dialogues, fairly briefly in one called *Timaeus*, in greater detail in *Critias*. These are supposed to be the first parts of a trilogy, the third of which was to be called *Hermocrates*. This third dialogue was never written and even the *Critias* is incomplete, breaking off in the middle of an explanation of why it was necessary for the Atlanteans to attack Athens. In both dialogues all description of Atlantis comes from the mouth of Critias.

This Critias was a real person, the grandson of Critias the Elder, who died in 403 BC. His description of Atlantis is based, he states, on what his grandfather told him and on documents in the possession of his family; and these documents and family tradition concern what certain Egyptian priests told Solon. Solon (d 558 BC), an Athenian statesman and lawgiver, was considered one of the wisest men of antiquity.

In the account of Critias, Atlantis is given a legendary beginning, as was usual in ancient histories. Poseidon, god of the sea, begets ten sons by a mortal woman. The eldest of the ten sons is called Atlas and the empire which Poseidon bestows on these sons is called Atlantis and is ruled thereafter by the descendants of the ten kings. The original small island becomes the Ancient Metropolis of the empire and the site of the temple of Poseidon. The rest of the very large empire is said to lie beyond the Pillars of Hercules (a phrase generally taken to mean the Straits of Gibraltar).

Eugen Kusch

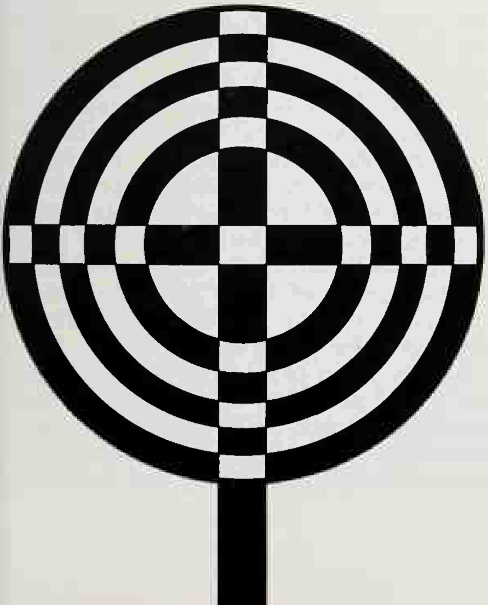
Left A conjectural map of the lost continent of Atlantis, which was said to have sunk under the sea in the space of a day and a night. Drawn in 1803, the map shows Atlantis situated west of the Moroccan coast. From Bory St Vincent's *Sur les Canaries*. *Right* Bust, probably Phoenician, from the Archeological Museum, Madrid, claimed by some writers to represent an Atlantean priestess *Below* The so-called Cross of Atlantis, an ancient symbol allegedly showing the three concentric walls of the capital city and the great waterway entering from the south

Lost Paradise

Atlantis is exceptionally rich and fertile, with level plains and well-wooded mountains, producing two crops a year with the aid of hot and cold springs, protected against cold winds and intensively cultivated. Politically, it is a federation of ten kings, led by the descendant of Atlas, meeting in the Ancient Metropolis for conference, consultation and a ritual bull-game. Technologically, it is extremely advanced, with written laws, a knowledge of metal-working, including the use of gold, silver and bronze, an exceptional grasp of engineering and architecture involved in the construction of temples, walls, long canals, tunnels and harbour works. The inhabitants worship a number of gods, of whom Poseidon is the chief, and they also practise a bull-cult. Socially, there is considerable stress on amenity, with public gardens and baths not only for men and women but also for horses.

All of this is consistent up to a point; and that point is that this empire collapsed in a single day and night, according to the account of the Egyptian priests, 9000 years before the date of their conversations with Solon, which means in about 9600 BC. This is so glaring an impossibility that it provides the great attraction of Atlantis for the credulous, who are delighted to believe in a Lost Paradise of immense antiquity which can be thought of as the source of human civilization; and a great stumbling block for the logical and the scientific, who point out a number of problems.

For example, in 9600 BC there were no Athenians to oppose Atlantis; the Mycenaean city of Athens emerged not much before the 16th century BC. In 9600 BC writing and metal-working had not been discovered anywhere in the world. The first and simplest farming communities date from, at the earliest, 7000 BC. Horses were unknown in Europe until the Bronze Age and were previously confined to Central Asia. The earliest monumental architecture can be dated to no earlier than 4000 BC . In brief, Atlantis as described by Plato is so impossible that his younger contemporary Aristotle assumed that Atlantis was a myth, an imaginary kingdom thought up by Plato to illustrate certain political theories.



But this explanation of Aristotle's is not really satisfactory. Plato's Atlantis is not a consistent myth; it illustrates no particular theory and is full of curious detail, very like a historical report, very unlike a political allegory. The characters in Plato's dialogues find the story from time to time baffling and apparently incredible, but continue on the basis that, strange though it seems, it is indeed true historical fact.

Fantastic Explanations

As a result, particularly since the discovery of America, innumerable writers have accepted Plato's account as fact and have endeavoured to explain it; and some of their explanations have been fantastic in the extreme. The usual explanation is to assume that Atlantis was an island continent in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, which subsided into the depths. This is claimed to explain all sorts of things from the creation of the Gulf Stream, the origin of the Sargasso Sea and the migration of eels, to the diffusion of cultures, plants and animals on either side of the Atlantic.

This is not the only location suggested for Atlantis, by any means; other candidates include the region of Heligoland, Tunisia, south-western Spain and north-western France. The trouble with all these explanations is that they are geophysically impossible, for the formation of the Atlantic Ocean has remained virtually unchanged since before the arrival of man on the earth.

What Was Atlantis?

Is there any way of reconciling all the anomalies in Plato's story, which will meet all the requirements of science? Such an explanation must be consistent with all the scientific disciplines; it must satisfy alike the historian, the geophysicist, the anthropologist and the archeologist.

For many years now it has been apparent to scholars that the Atlantis described by Plato was very like what archeology has uncovered of the High Bronze Age civilizations of the Aegean and Near East – such as the Minoans, Mycenaeans, Hittites, Egyptians and Babylonians – between about 2500 and 1200 BC. Was there, then, something wrong with Plato's date? Had the Egyptian priests or Solon confused 900 with 9000 years? If so the date of the disaster would be 1500 BC instead of 9600 BC.

This hypothesis immediately makes the Atlantean civilization credible. Again, if there is a mistake with the power of ten here, it could apply equally to the large dimensions given for the empire of Atlantis. If so, the dimensions for the Royal City of

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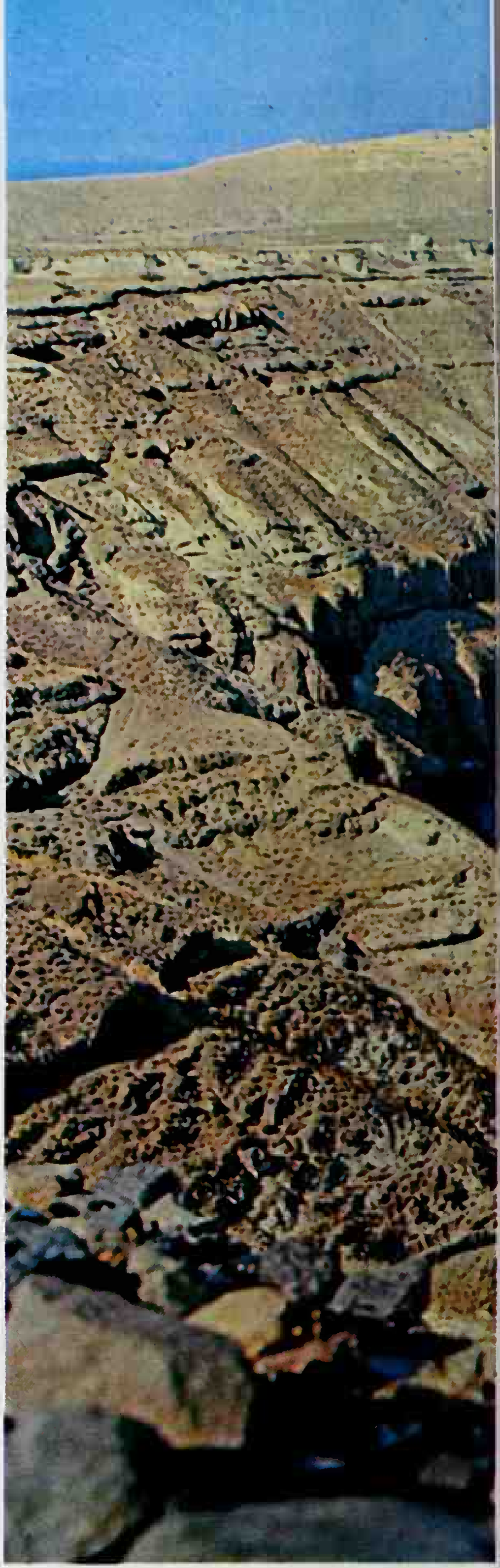


Atlantis shrink to something very closely approximating to the central plain of Crete (the heartland of the Minoan civilization) and the date of the disaster to around 1500 BC, the time nearly enough when the Minoan Empire collapsed in a series of disasters which led to the Mycenaean takeover. Furthermore, Minoan Crete was a prosperous power in close contact with both Athens and Egypt, both of which were then in existence.

Was there a natural cataclysm which took place in the Aegean around this date? There was indeed: the world's greatest known volcanic explosion, that of the island volcano of Santorini, some 70 miles north of Crete.

The Cataclysm

Santorini – or Thira – today consists of three islands. These lie round a great expanse of water, in the centre of which rise two relatively modern volcanic islets, the more recent of which is still intermittently active. This great expanse of water is about seven miles from north to south and close to five miles from east to west, with an area of 32 square miles; and its depth is between 300 and 400 metres. It is in fact a gigantic volcanic crater of the type known as a caldera. A caldera is formed as a result of a long and violent period of activity in an island volcano, when so much material has been poured out that the volcano collapses into the hollow chamber beneath and the sea rushes in with a colossal explosion. The major part of the island disappears beneath the sea and stupendous tidal waves spread out in every direction, bringing destruction near and far with floods, overwhelming masses of pumice and volcanic ash and, usually, accompanying earthquakes.

The most striking recent example of such a disaster is the explosion of Krakatoa in Indonesia in 1883. This explosion was heard nearly 3000 miles away, some 295 towns in Java and Sumatra were wholly or partially destroyed, 36,000 people perished, the sound waves travelled three times round the world, volcanic dust rose to a height of 50 miles and some of it fell in Japan, Africa and Europe. Tidal waves crossed the entire Pacific and were still of sufficient strength to break anchor chains in Valparaiso, Chile.

Now the effects of such an eruption can be calculated on the basis of the size of the caldera. The caldera of Santorini has a volume of about five times that of Krakatoa; and the violence of its explosion must be assumed to have been something like five times as great. Its effects in the landlocked and island-studded Aegean and its wider effects in the whole eastern Mediterranean must have been catastrophic beyond imagination. It caused the instant disappearance of the greater part of a previously circular island which it had already rendered uninhabitable with deposits of pumice and ash, which are still nearly 200 ft deep in places; and it produced tidal waves which must have swept many miles inland in nearby Crete with wholesale destruction and loss of life.

We are therefore left with two curiously similar accounts, one of which is Plato's. The other, the sum of the discoveries of geophysicists and archeologists, tells us that the great empire of Minoan Crete suffered a series of natural disasters in the later 16th century BC and that these disasters were caused by fires, earthquakes and floods which brought about the end of the civilization; and that around 1500 BC a fertile island, some 70 miles north of Crete, blew up in almost total destruction and caused widespread devastation throughout the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean. These two accounts of unparalleled disaster are so similar in nature, location and date that it seemed they must be different accounts of the same catastrophe. And when an archeological expedition, led by Professor Marinatos of Athens, uncovered Minoan remains deep under the pumice of Santorini in 1967, the final link was added. Santorini was confidently identified with the Ancient Metropolis of Atlantis, and Minoan Crete with the Royal City and empire of the Atlanteans. The puzzle appeared to have been solved.

Doubts began to arise, however, and by the end of the 1980s the theory that the Santorini eruption destroyed Minoan Crete was under vigorous challenge. This was because radiocarbon dating and tree-ring

The vanished Atlantis has often been claimed as the source of similar cultural developments on both sides of the Atlantic, including colossal statues and pyramids. ***Facing left*** **Giant Toltec figures at Tula, Mexico.** ***Above*** **The island of Santorini, or Thira, possibly the original Atlantis, showing the edge of the volcanic crater now filled by the sea**

dating appeared to push the date of the eruption back into the 17th century BC, not only long before Minoan civilization in Crete collapsed, but before it had even reached its peak late in the 16th century. Excavations in Crete and at various sites on the Aegean coast have discovered layers of pumice which suggest that the gigantic volcanic upheaval on Santorini occurred well before the destruction of the palaces of Minoan Crete, which could have been caused by invaders.

An alternative suggestion, put forward by a geo-archeologist, Eberhard Zangger, traces the inspiration of Plato's Atlantis to memories of the Bronze Age city of Troy, sacked by the besieging Greeks. Recent archeological work has shown that Troy was a much larger and more powerful city than was previously realized. The royal dynasty of Troy, incidentally, traced its lineage back to Atlas. There are several similiarities between Troy and Atlantis, as described by Plato. The differences, including the discrepancy about the date and the fact that, far from being 'beyond the Pillars of Hercules', Troy was at the other end of the Mediterranean altogether, are ascribed to muddle and confusion in the Egyptian traditions on which Plato relied.

The theory that Minoan Crete inspired Atlantis still commands widespread support, but is no longer unchallenged. The mystery keeps its fascination and the debate continues.

EDWARD BACON *

(For Atlantis in occult and New Age speculation, see WESTERN MYSTERY TRADITION).

FURTHER READING: Phyllis Y. Forsyth, *Atlantis: The Making of a Myth* (McGill-Queens University Press, 1980); Eberhard Zangger, *The Flood From Heaven: Deciphering the Atlantis Legend* (Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1992).

Atlas

In Greek mythology, the giant who held up the sky to prevent it from falling on the earth; he was identified with the Atlas Mountains in Africa and legend said that he was turned to stone when Perseus showed him the Gorgon's head; his name was first used for a collection of maps by Mercator in 1595, with a picture of him holding up the globe of the earth on his shoulders.

Mansell Collection

Atman

In Indian religion and philosophy, the 'self', the part of each man which is eternal; it is identified with Brahman, the one unchanging reality behind surface appearances. See BRAHMAN.

ATONEMENT

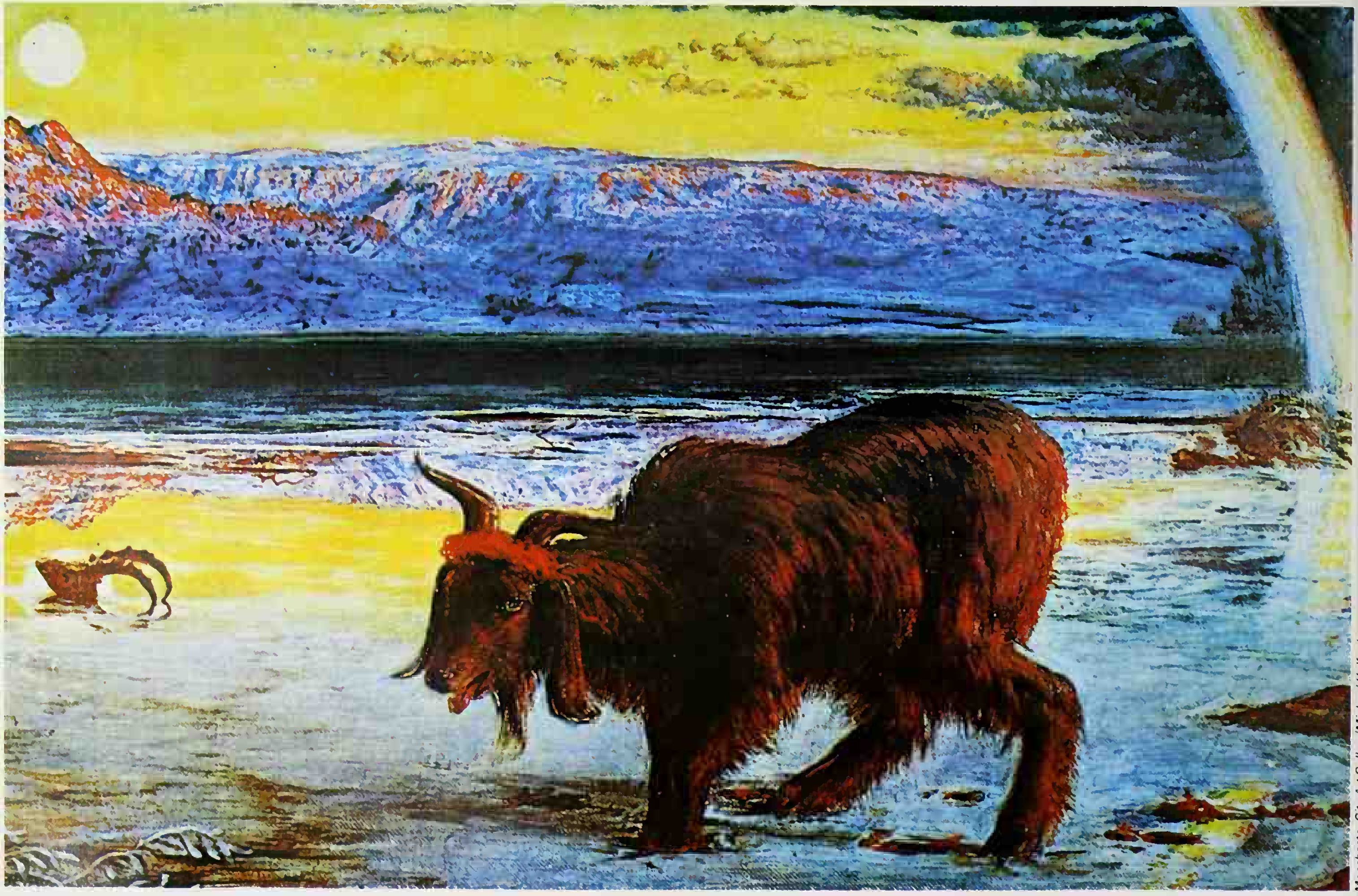
THE WORD MEANS literally 'at one-ment' and refers to reconciliation between man and God, who become at one with each other. Theories of atonement assume that the proper relationship between a man and his god has been broken by a 'sin' or offence, but that the relationship can be restored.

In the history of religions there are two main ways in which a man can atone for sin. One is by sacrifice, by giving up an animal or something which he owns and offering it to the offended god (see SACRIFICE). The other is by giving up the sinful action itself, by repentance and determination not to sin again.

Both these ways of atoning appear side by side in the Old Testament, together with another belief, also found in early Greek religion, that the sins of the people can be literally banished by transferring them to a scapegoat, which is then driven out of the community. As part of the ritual of the Day of Atonement (described in Leviticus, chapter 16), the sins of the people were recited over the head of a goat, which was then led away into the desert, carrying the sins of the people with it (see SCAPEGOAT). The scapegoat ceremonies were given up in the 1st century AD but the Jewish Day of Atonement remains an important festival, at which the faithful fast and repent.

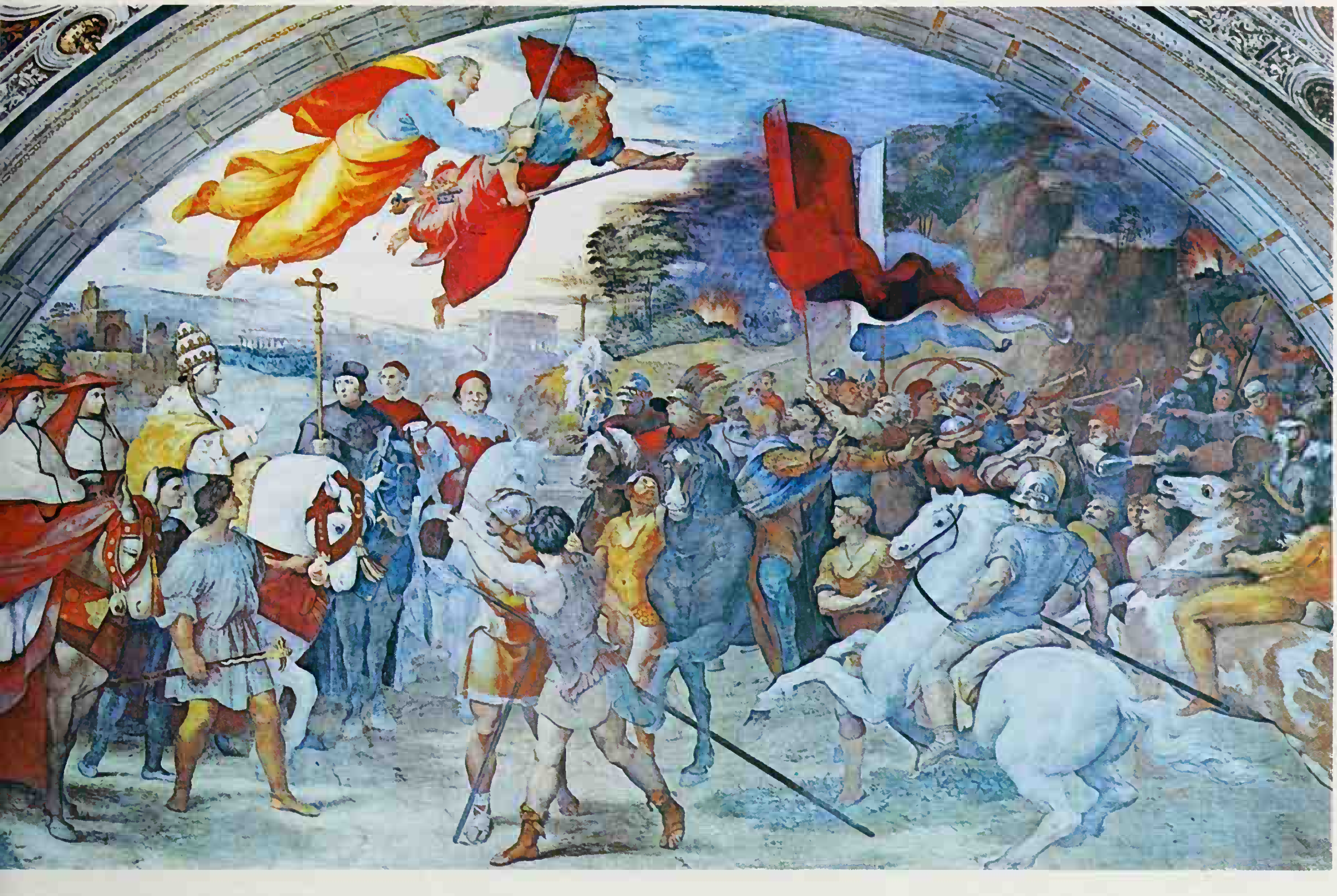
Christian theories of atonement are connected with the scapegoat through Isaiah 53, verses 4–6: '... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ... and with his stripes we are healed.' Christians identified the 'man of sorrows' of this passage with Jesus, and it became a central doctrine of Christianity that Jesus had reconciled man with God through his life and death, as he himself had suggested.

Different Christian thinkers have put forward different views about the mechanism of the Atonement, but that the coming of God to earth as a man made it possible for sinful man to be reconciled to God is accepted by all denominations.



The Scapegoat by Holman Hunt: the goat to which the sins of the people were transferred and which was then banished into the desert

Manchester City Art Gallery/Michael Holford


Scala

ATTILA

The legend of St Peter and St Paul repelling Attila from the gates of Rome, by Raphael

KNOWN TO WESTERN CHRISTENDOM as 'the Scourge of God', Attila was leader of the Huns, the savage horsemen who came originally from Mongolia and who by the 5th century AD had established an empire in central and eastern Europe. Short and squat, large-headed and flat-nosed, famed for brutality and destruction, Attila led the Huns in many campaigns, including one into Italy in 452. When the Huns approached Rome, Pope Leo I led an embassy which persuaded Attila to spare the city, a feat so astonishing that it was later said that St Peter and St Paul had appeared in person to overawe the barbarian king.

Attila died in 453 of a haemorrhage but within 100 years it was said that he had been murdered by his wife. This rumour and the fact that the Burgundians on the Rhine had earlier been disastrously defeated by the Huns, account for Attila's role in legends. In the Norse 9th century *Atlakvida*, the cruel Attila, lustful for gold, invites the Burgundian king, whose sister he has married, to his court to extort the Burgundian treasure-hoard from him. Although the Huns cut out the living heart of the king's brother, he refuses to yield up the treasure and is thrown into a snake-pit where he bravely dies. But his sister revenges him by killing Attila and the sons she has borne to him.

By contrast, in the great German epic, the *Nibelungenlied*, completed in Austria in the early 13th century, Attila appears under the name of Etzel as a noble and generous ruler, because the Austrians and Bavarians had inherited a favourable picture of him from the Ostrogoths, whose own hero-king Dietrich (known to history as Theodoric the Great) was said to have found refuge at Attila's court. This version of the story reverses the Norse tale. Attila's wife, sister of the Burgundian king, invites the Burgundian leaders to her husband's court and takes her own vengeance on them there.

FURTHER READING: E.A. Thompson, *A History of Attila and the Huns* (Greenwood, 1975, c1948).

Giraudon

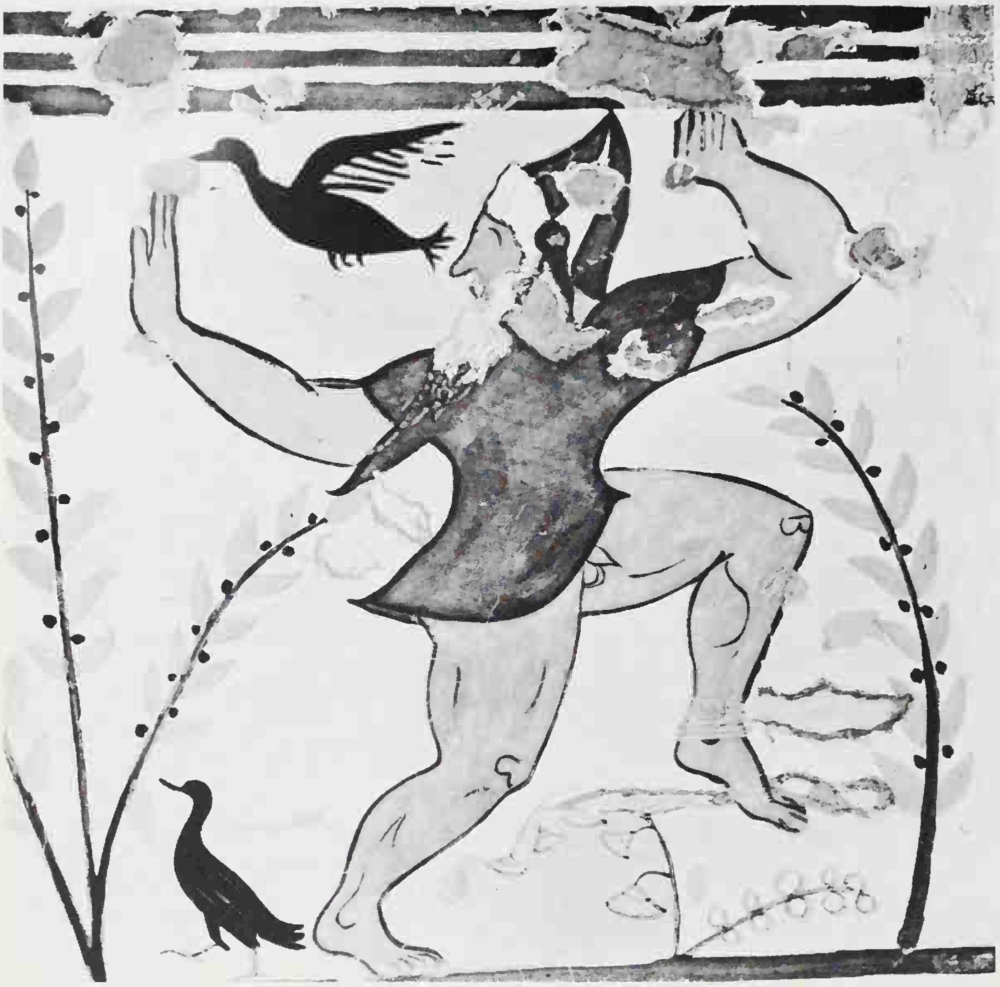
Attis

Youthful god of Asia Minor, lover of the goddess Cybele; fundamentally a vegetation god who died and was reborn like the crops each year; connected with violets which sprang from his blood and the pine tree into which he was transformed on his death.
See CYBELE.

Mansell Collection

Attribute

In mythology, a creature or object associated with a particular deity and revealing an aspect of the deity's nature: examples are the herald's wand of Hermes or Mercury, the owl of Athene, the ape of Thoth, and the arrows of some American Indian sky gods.



The Bettmann Archive

An augur prepares to predict the future by the flight of the ravens, birds whose cries were regarded as favourable if they were heard on the augur's right: from the tomb of the Augurs, Corneto Tarquinia

The flight or cries of birds, and other natural occurrences, were not accidents for the Romans but evidence of the wishes of the gods

AUGURY

THE ANCIENT ROMANS attached considerable importance to the taking of omens, called *auguria* or *auspicia*. The object was not so much to see into the future as to find out whether the gods approved or disapproved of some proposed course of action.

Domestic augury, in which the omens were taken by the master of the house, gradually dropped out of use, except on the occasion of a marriage. But public augury remained important in official and military matters until at least c 30 BC. The public practice of augury was restricted to the members of the college of augurs, whose function was to advise those state officials who had the legal right to take omens. The official could reject the augur's advice but Roman history told of many disasters which had followed defiance of the omens.

The augurs distinguished two kinds of omens: those which were deliberately waited and watched for, and those which occurred casually. Omens of the first kind were taken more seriously and alone had legal validity. They included thunder, lightning and comets; the flight and cries of birds; and the behaviour of certain sacred chickens. Casual omens consisted of the unexpected appearances of animals, and certain minor happenings (which were known as *dirae*), such as the spilling of salt or wine, stumbling, sneezing, or unintentional noises like the creaking of chairs. With the passage of time, the number of dirae grew so unreasonably large that the augurs were obliged to close the list. It is recorded that one Roman general, Marcus Marcellus, used to travel in a closed litter, in order to shut such untoward omens out of sight and hearing.

Omens from Birds

The official who took the omens sat in a special tent, which shielded him against troublesome omens and had only one opening, facing south. The pitching of this tent in the right place at the right time, and with the correct alignment, was a closely guarded professional secret of the augurs. The tent was set up on the eve of taking the omens and the official had to sleep in it, rise early, and sit on a stone or a solid seat, so as to avoid the risk of a creaking chair. A rumbling stomach or an object inadvertently dropped at this moment were interpreted as unfavourable signs. If everything was in order, however, the augur declared a silence, and pronounced an invocation. The official then fixed his gaze on the space in front of him.

If the omens were to be taken from wild birds, the augur stood on high ground, or on a tower. Facing east, he marked out an area for observation (the *templum*) in the sky with his staff. He then covered his head and sacrificed to the gods.

Not all birds counted for the purposes of augury. Those which did were divided into those whose flight was significant (including the eagle, buzzard and vulture), and those whose cries were regarded as ominous (the crow, raven and owl). The woodpecker and the osprey belonged to both these categories. The augur had to mark the direction of flight in relation to the four sections into which the templum was divided, the height of the birds above ground, the rapidity and sound of wingbeats, the frequency, pitch and strength of cries, and the general behaviour of the birds.

The rules were very complicated and in time a whole technical literature grew up on the subject, which had a jargon of its own. The college of augurs kept archives recording actual cases, and these were used as the basis of handbooks, which explained, for example, that the cry of the crow was a favourable omen if it was heard on the augur's left; that of the raven, if it was heard on the right. They set out the precise meaning of a bird seen shedding its feathers or letting droppings fall. If there were many contradictory signs, an attempt was made to see where the predominant tendency lay. Some birds carried more weight as omens than others – the eagle more than the rook, for instance.

The Sacred Chickens

Divination from the behaviour of the sacred chickens had its origin in the significance attributed to a bird flying with something in its beak. The most favourable sign was when the birds ate gluttonously, letting food drop from their beaks as they did so. But Cicero, whose work *On Divination* is the chief ancient source for our knowledge of augury, complains that the chickens were kept in cages and deliberately starved, so that their greediness was no true sign from Jupiter. Taking the auspices from chickens was a favourite method with Roman generals.

Although augury seems to have been held in high esteem by the Roman public at large as 'foreknowledge of the truth that is to be', some maintained that it was merely a tool in the hands of public officials.

Originally there were only three augurs and until the year 300 BC, only members of Rome's aristocracy were eligible for this office, which carried with it a salary and certain privileges not granted to other priests. The number of augurs was gradually increased, until in the 1st century BC Julius Caesar finally raised it to 16, including himself in the capacity of chief priest.

The augurs wore a mantle with a purple border, and their distinctive emblem was the *lituus*, a curved rod with which they marked out the limits of the templum. In imperial times the art of augury fell gradually into neglect, partly because the rules of divination had become so complicated, and the conditions required for favourable omens so numerous, that it became almost impossible to conduct an augury which led to a favourable result.

(See also BIRDS; DIVINATION.)

AURA

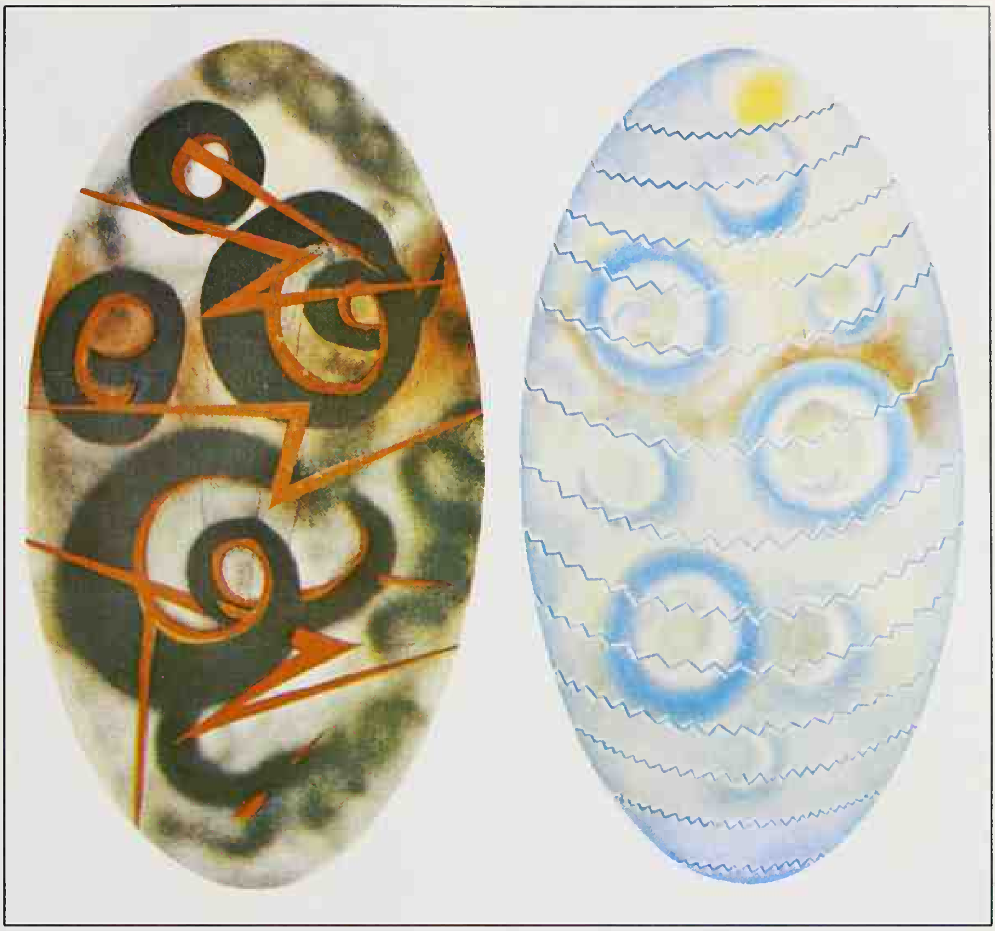
THE WORD 'aura' is used by occultists to mean a faint cloud or luminous appearance which has been seen surrounding the human body by certain gifted individuals or clairvoyants. The aura comes from the same layer of occult speculation as the astral body (see ASTRAL BODY) and the etheric double (see DOUBLE), speculation about the nature of man.

It is clear that, besides an objective visible body, each human being has subjective invisible experiences, of which he himself is aware but which he can only communicate meaningfully to others by means of speech, gestures, writing and other signs. These subjective experiences include sensations, memories, thoughts, urges and decisions; all of which have been classified by psychologists ancient, medieval and modern. In all forms of religion these invisible parts of a man are regarded as more important than his body.

The question is whether these inner, subjective parts of a human being, which undoubtedly exist, ever become observable as outer, objective phenomena – specifically, in the form of an aura. At the lowest level, a materialistic explanation will dismiss the aura as being no more than gaseous substances emitted from the human body, and one sceptic writing on the subject has dismissively referred the aura to body odour.

But besides odours, many living things also give off radiant heat. Warm-blooded animals can be detected by their heat in the dark by snakes which prey on them. Some animals are luminous – for example, the glow-worm. Electricity is generated in living processes and can be helpful in the study of them. In 1858 a well-known industrial chemist, Baron Karl von Reichenbach, claimed to have discovered certain radiations coming from magnets, crystals, plants and animals, which could be seen and felt in the dark by sensitive subjects after acclimatization for a period of some two or three hours.

The north pole of a magnet sent out a blue glow and a cool current of air, the south an orange appearance and a warm feeling. The same was found with the ends of crystals and with parts of animals. The human body showed blue and felt cool on the right side, orange and warm on the left. The radiation was called Od, Odyle or Odic Force. The French hypnotist de Rochas and William Gregory, Professor of Chemistry at Edinburgh, also believed they observed it.


Man Visible and Invisible

Two illustrations from C.W.Leadbetter's book *Man Visible and Invisible*: 'Intense anger' (*left*): the red zigzag lines represent the arrows of uncontrolled rage; 'A sudden rush of devotion' (*right*): a spiritual experience sweeps over a nun at prayer

What Aura Colours Signify

Red: energy; lust; passing anger
Orange: humour; ambition; harmony
Yellow: intellect; trickery
Blue: intuition; seriousness; healing
Green: calm; sympathy; possessiveness
Violet: warmth; humility
Purple: great spirituality
Pink: love; compassion; understanding
Silver flashes: great creativity
Dull colours: disharmony; problems
White: death-wish
Black: deep discontent

In recent years the psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich has claimed to discover a common functioning principle in living and non-living things, manifesting fully only in the former; in observing it, he finds the same polarity of the blue cool radiation as against the warm orange. Many other alleged radiations have been suspected of playing a part in the phenomenon of the aura, including the mitogenetic rays discovered by A. Gurwitsch in 1923, which emanate from plant tissue and affect the cell division of yeast. They are ultra-violet radiation of low intensity.

Kilner's Auras

Although it had often been claimed that the human aura had been seen by clairvoyants, it was not until 1911 that W. R. Kilner devised ways of showing it experimentally. He did this by two methods: firstly by looking at the human body through a dilute solution of a dye called dicyanin; and secondly by looking at a very bright light through a strong alcoholic solution. The second method must be used for a brief period only, as it is otherwise dangerous. Later, H. Boddington discovered a type of glass manufactured in Czechoslovakia which dispenses with the use of solutions. Kilner also used carmine, and since his time a number of other dyes have been found to be more or less satisfactory.

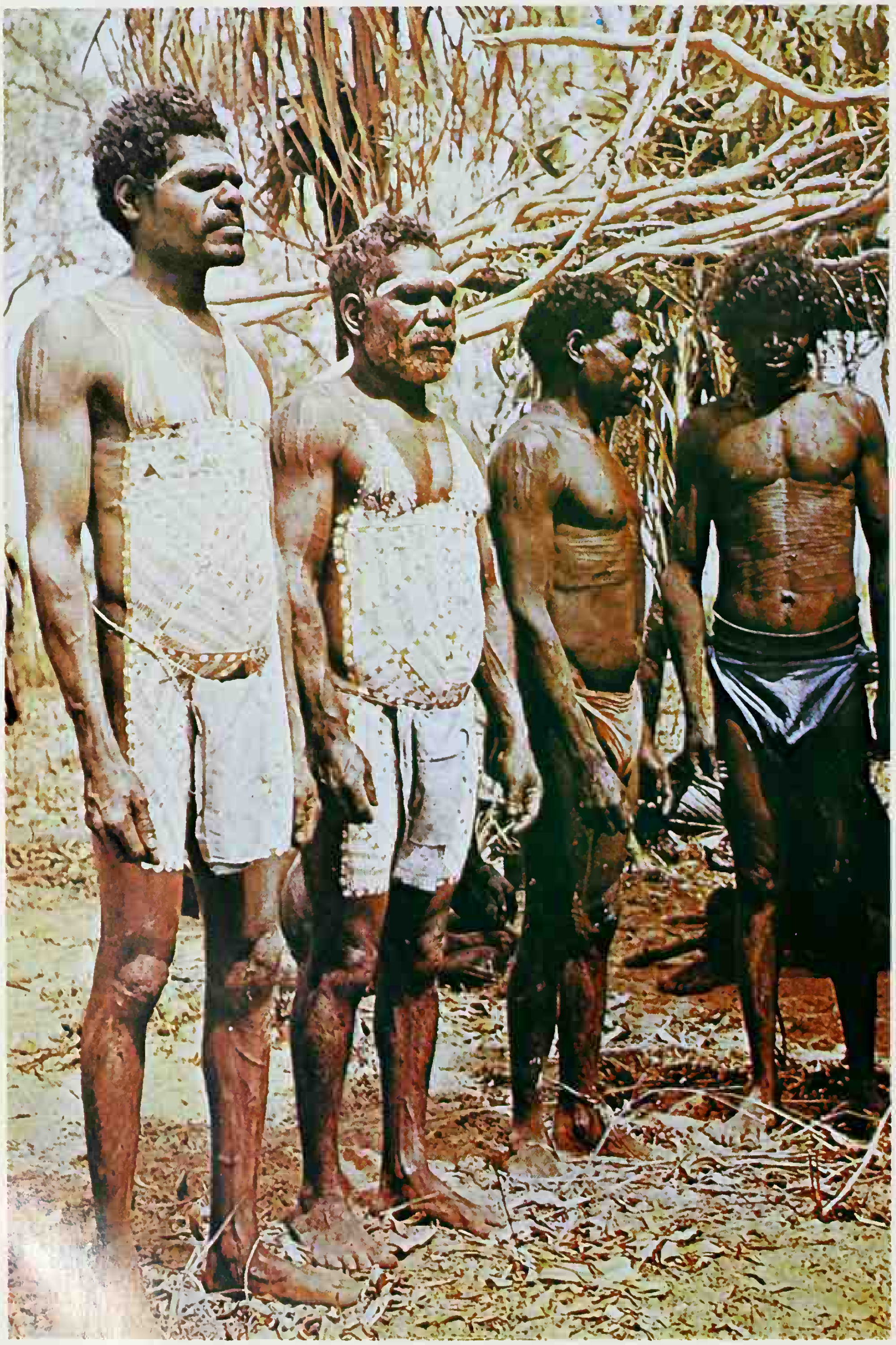
The aura can only be seen against a dead black background. It is not a vapour but appears as a radiation, usually blue-grey in colour. It is also seen in magnets and other objects, and is affected by magnets. It changes with age, but only to any marked degree in females. Kilner distinguished between an outer aura, which was without regular shape, striated (marked with small parallel lines) not visible with the carmine screen, 1.5 to 3.5 inches in breadth at different places; an inner aura visible through the carmine screen, and inside the inner aura an apparently empty space in which careful investigations showed faint coloured striations, uniformly a quarter of an inch deep when visible. Later the author distinguished an ultra-outer aura, which was, however, seldom visible.

Kilner's main object in this research was to aid diagnosis of disease, because he believed that illness caused changes in the appearance of the aura. He identified the innermost of his three subdivisions of the aura with what is called the etheric double. Clairvoyants consider this the most dense vehicle, the 'health aura' or a visible part of it. The etheric double is probably physical matter of a refined character. Highly trained clairvoyants are said to see the astral body, which is so called from its starry appearance. A few privileged seers claim to see the 'mental body' or even the spiritual centre of the being, but this must be rare. (See KIRLIAN ANALYSIS.)

AUSTRALIA

Myth and Magic of the Aborigines

Among many beautiful aborigine myths, one of the most striking is the concept of the Dreamtime, the 'eternal now' in which they are at one with their ancestors and heroes



Axel Poignant

Australian aborigines, their bodies painted as part of a highly secret ritual of purification: from Arnhem Land in northern Australia

THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES are a dark-brown-skinned people, with narrow heads, sloping foreheads, deep-set eyes, broad noses, and black, wavy to curly hair. Archeological and anthropological research suggests that they came originally from the southeastern Asian archipelago region. Following population increase, some groups moved southwards, crossing the narrow waters between islands in simple boats. Eventually, some 20-30,000 years ago, one or more groups had reached what, after the submersion of the Sahul Shelf, became the northern shores of Australia.

The basic requirement of each migrating group was permanent drinking water, within range of which its members could obtain food by hunting and gathering what nature provided, for the aborigines were neither gardeners nor herdsmen. When the numbers of a group so increased that they could not obtain sufficient food within their accustomed range in bad as well as good seasons, some of them hived off to live around another water-place. This hiving-off process was repeated until all Australia was occupied. In the course of time, separation resulted in variations in language and customs. Neighbouring groups, however, who kept in close touch with one another, retaining a common language, frequently saw themselves as members of the same broad community. They often had a common name, but never a central authority such as a council or a chief.

Each local group with its own food-gathering country is self-governing. It is an enlarged family, consisting of a man and his brothers and their children and son's children, whose wives come from, and whose sisters marry into, other local groups. In aboriginal thought the living members of such a group belong to their own country, not because they are descended, as we would say, from the migrating band which settled there, but because they were brought there by that

Australia News and Information

Ceremony during the Bangtail Muster at Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. The songs and dances at aboriginal ceremonies frequently enact and re-create the adventures of the tribal ancestors, to strengthen the bond between the ancestors and their descendants

band – in spirit form. And there, in a water-place or in some other natural feature associated with the migrating group, they sojourned ever since until they entered their mothers' wombs to be born, or indeed, to be reincarnated. And after death, they return to those same spirit 'homes'.

Pioneers in the Dreamtime

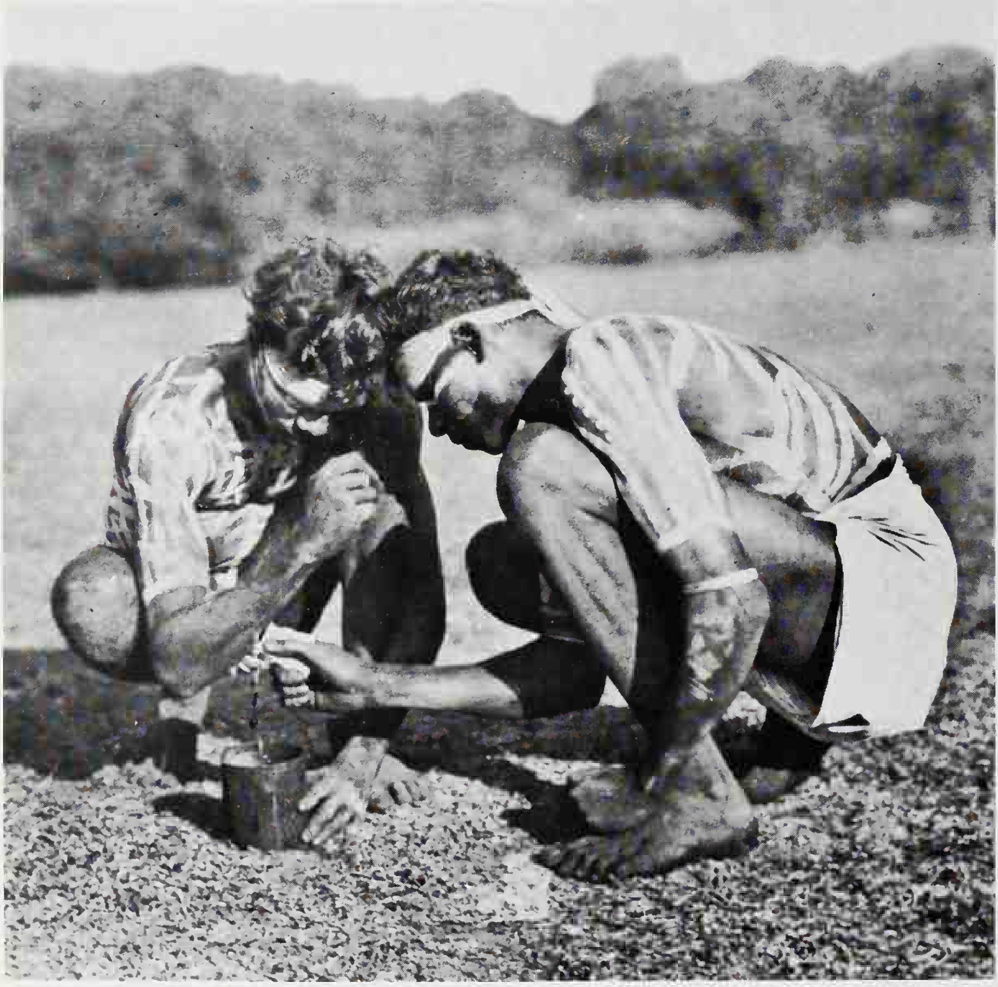
According to myth, the pioneers in that period long ago lived, hunted, made implements and performed ceremonies just as their representatives do today. Time, however, has fashioned the pioneers in heroic mould, endowing them with extraordinary powers, so that their actions, especially the exploits of their leaders, provide an explanation of the world as it now is. By striking mountains with ritual staffs or by hurling their boomerangs, the heroes cut gaps through them. Striking the ground with a staff, as Moses did at the rock in Horeb, they caused water to rise as in a well. They appeared now as humans, and now as animals or birds. They travelled through the air or under the ground. But above all, by their actions, later copied in ritual, they caused plants and animals, birds and fish to appear, and human beings too. In their journeyings, spirit children were born either from the women or emanated from the bodies of the heroes, just as, in ritual today, the bird-down and paint flies off the actors' bodies as they vibrate themselves rapidly. Finally, when they died, their spirits went into a water-place, or remained in their dead bodies and their limbs changed into rock or earth, trees or anthills; and there they remained as a 'reservoir' or home of emanating or pre-existing spirits of the generations yet to be born.

What the aborigines believe about their own origin and their birth from generation to generation, they also believe about animals and birds, reptiles and fish, insects and plants, and indeed also about inanimate things such as rain, wind and fire.

Initiation

The lad had made no sound that I could hear, all through his ordeal, no movement that I could see....The old warrior bending over him thrust his dirty fingers into the boy's open mouth, feeling, tugging, jerking at a front tooth. With his bony fingernails soon stained with blood he forced back the gum from the tooth, jerking and tugging to loosen it a bit. I saw the boy's eyes close tightly as his face screwed up, but he did not murmur. The old fellow then withdrew from his matted hair a stone punch, a naturally cylindrical stone about five inches long and as thick as a finger...The old man placed the punch end hard against the tooth, then struck it sharply with a stone. At the sharp click there was an instant shouted 'Wah ! Ai!' from all hands. Silence, while the old fellow placed his punch on the tooth for the next blow. I had almost heard the tooth crunch agonizingly in its socket. The lad kept his eyes tight shut, and now he could not quite control the shivering of his body. But he had made no sound. The old man raised his arm again. 'Click!' echoed by the roar and stamp of feet. The boy shivered violently now, but still he made no sound. Again that click but this time, to a triumphant roar of 'Wah! Ai! Wah! Ai!', the operator held up a bloody tooth.

Ion L. Idriess: *Our Living Stone Age*



Mansell Collection

Cicatrization, often part of an initiation ceremony. Pepper is rubbed into wounds cut into the skin, so as to leave raised scars. It is essential that the initiate show his manhood by making no sound; he bites on a wooden ball

Many of the heroic figures who gave the land its features, and from whom men and women arose, were in essence both human and animal or plant. This explains why they could appear and behave now as humans, and now in another form.

Even today, when an aborigine says he is, for example, wallaby, he means what he says. He and the wallaby species are 'one flesh' and one in the unseen world, for they and their forbears had a common origin. The man-wallaby hero of the 'creative' time, called the Dreamtime or the Dreaming, was by his very nature and actions the source of both a line of human beings and also a line or species of wallabies. Both emanated from him and ever since the human line or clan has been named wallaby, and has been linked with wallabies in ritual and belief. When the hero 'died' his body changed into a stone, a tree or some other object; it became an inexhaustible centre of life-cells or pre-existing spirits, which go forth to be born in human or wallaby form.

The land is dotted about with spirit centres for human beings and natural species of phenomena, each along the paths followed by the heroes. A woman passing unwittingly near such a centre, and realizing soon after that she has conceived, will be told by her husband that a spirit child from that centre, wallaby, bandicoot, pigeon, plum tree or whatever it is, has entered her body on 'the incarnation road'; or a man 'finds', that is, sees in a vision of the day or night, a spirit child which then follows him to his camp and to his wife.

Ritual for Nature

With regard to natural species and phenomena, the men of each local group, who are related in the father-son line, constitute a secret lodge. Their task is to cherish the myths, chants and ritual, the sacred sites and symbols connected with particular Dreamtime heroes, who were, or gave rise to, a particular animal, plant or natural object. After initiation, they are shown the sites and symbols amidst much solemnity, and taught the ritual. Thereafter, at the prescribed time of the year they must anoint the sacred relics with blood or red ochre and fat, and perform the prescribed ritual which re-enacts the heroes' travels and exploits. Then the lifecells or 'spirits' of the animal or plant, or whatever it is, will go forth and increase the species in its due season. Similar sites and rituals are associated with rain, fire and the heavenly bodies, ensuring water, warmth and light .

This system of mythology and ritual is known as totemism. A person's totem denotes the particular animal, plant or object to which he stands in a special relationship. Usually he neither injures, kills nor eats it unless he is in dire distress. Usually too, he must not marry a person of the same totem, for those of the one totem are like brothers and sisters. The totem – the animal or bird or indeed a plant – by behaving in some unexpected way before a man's waking eyes or in a dream, warns him if danger is near, strengthens him when he is sick, and turns his mind towards absent relations in trouble.

Above all, if a man's totem involves him in ritual duties, his responsibility is great. He is a custodian of the totemic sanctuary and of the ceremonial objects and the ritual connected with it. For him and the members of the totem-lodge, the chanting and acting are the break-through of the creative Dreamtime, and the symbols (outwardly artefacts of wood, stone or other material) are sacramental signs of its presence. Thus, in a performance, the chanting goes on and on; the decorated actors appear; but they are no longer the men of a few hours before: they are now the heroes of the Dreaming. Excitement rises. The chanting becomes louder and louder and the rhythm more vigorously marked, until singers rise up, draw blood from themselves, and dance a prescribed and very energetic backward slide, until at a sign all is over.

In another ritual, while the singers 'chant the journeyings' of the kangaroo ancestors through the desert country, the young men are anointed with human blood; and then when the song has brought the kangaroo clan almost to the end of the journey, the young men silently and quickly form a human pyramid. The climax is near: the dust rises up from the heavy beating of the rhythm sticks on the ground; the chanting

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Top left **The head of a totem group after a ceremony, with blood and eagle's down on his body. Important totem rites are performed only by men: women are excluded**

Top right **The singing and dancing-out of myths are partly intended to hand on the stories to the younger men. Every few moments there may be a pause while the old men explain the meaning of each part of the ritual**

Above **The singers and dancers work up to a high pitch of excitement. sometimes cutting themselves until the blood runs**

is intensified and an actor, the headman Dreaming Kangaroo, springs on to the top of, and over, the pyramid, which represents a great sandhill that the kangaroo totemic band had to cross.

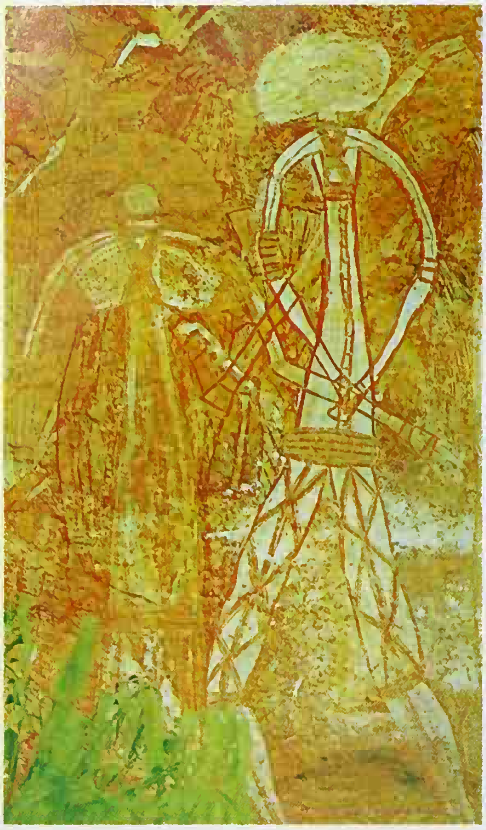
The Eternal-Now

In these and hundreds of similar rituals the dramatic effect is striking. Actors. singers and onlookers alike feel that the life-giving, the creative, the timeless past is present, embracing all. It is the Dreaming; for just as, in our dream life, action is not limited by space or time, so it was and is in the time-state of the Eternal-Now.

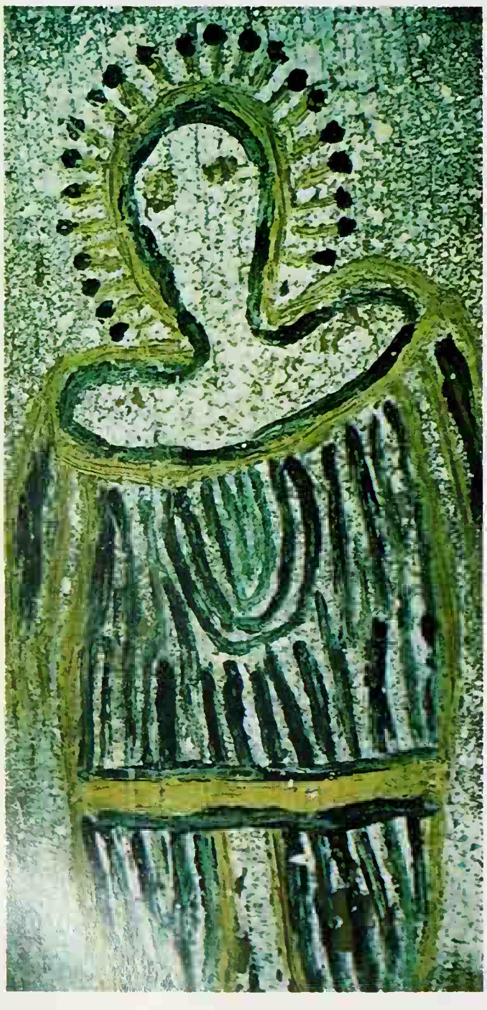
Only the most obtuse observer would not be affected by the awe with which the men of a secret cult, a totemic lodge, approach the sanctuary of the transformed relics, or of the symbols of the Dreaming, and silently, carefully and reverentially handling them, break into chant. Then and there we recognize that the aborigines' inner religious experience is deep and vital. We recognize that they sense an abiding and lifegiving reality through their myths, rituals and symbols.

Sacred Chants

Many of the sacred chants may seem uninspiring to the outsider, as he reads literal translations. Verse after verse, scores of them recount monotonously and repetitively everyday, ordinary happenings. The heroic ancestor or the totemic party move here, move there, cross a sand-hill or over a plain; but they also reveal their supernormal powers, of moving through the air or under the ground, and of changing into other forms, of men acting as animals, and animals as men. But the very 'everyday-


Picturepoint London

Above Cave-painting of spirits *Below* Wandjina spirit who created the landscape of an area and disappeared underground, after painting a picture of himself which the aborigines must keep in good repair


Axel Poignant

ness' and repetitiveness of the actions are not boring. It is the singers' and actors' own life writ large, for it was the powerful Dreaming heroes who so lived, and whose power is still present through myth, ritual and symbols.

Very many myths are recorded in this form, or by the aboriginal narrator telling in broken English the story of the heroic past. But how different when the recorder is thoroughly versed in the narator's language and culture! Then the brief verses come to life; their poetic expression is revealed and their grip on the people understood. Such a recorder is the linguist T. G. H. Strehlow, who lived as a child on a Mission among the Aranda of Central Australia, and for more than 30 years studied their chants, myths and rituals.

Here is one example of his work. A group of honey-ant people left its old home at Ljaba to go on a long journey west to another honey-ant centre. Coming to a curve in the mountain range, and realizing that Ljaba would thereafter be hidden from their view, they looked back and saw the 'pale purple peaks which surround it' but, like a pall of smoke, a haze was enfolding the hills. They were sad because they did not expect to see their home again. As tears ran down their cheeks, they chanted:

Enfolded by plains lies Ljaba,
Beyond the far horizon lies Ljaba.
Enfolded by plains lies Ljaba,
Dimmed by the enveloping mists.

They moved on, but to this day, when Northern Aranda men perform the honey-ant ritual of Ljaba, 'tears come into their eyes as their low chant trembles on into the hushed pulse of the night'.

The Hero in the Sky

Throughout most of the interior of Australia, the mythological heroes, singly, in pairs or in groups, in human or totemic form, journeyed back and forth. When their courses were finished they sank into the ground or became stones, trees or other objects which have remained to this day as memorials and sources of life.

In Eastern Australia, however, especially along the coast and the great Darling and Murray river system, the culture giver of old, often with his wife and brother or son, or with a group, arose from the earth, or just appeared, origin unknown. In some versions, he landed from the sea. He travelled southward, establishing groups and tribes, furnishing them with implements and weapons, naming natural species, arranging the totemic system and rules of marriage, and teaching the tribes rituals, especially those of initiating young men. And when his work was finished, he went up to the sky.

He was known by different names, of which Biral in the north, Baiame and Goin in New South Wales, Nurundere in the lower Murray River region and Bundjil in Victoria were the most widespread. But these names were possibly not his real names. He was generally referred to as the All-Father, or 'our father', whose voice was heard in the thunder and whose symbol was the bullroarer, a flat strip of wood tied to a string which makes a roaring noise when whirled around.

Baiame could be visited by medicine-men, the 'clever men' as their fellows called them. They were men of 'high degree', who having been initiated like every other male, then passed through a vivid experience of death and rising again, which was preceded by training, fasting and discipline. This experience, according to some accounts, also included being taken to the sky, where they saw the All-Father and received magical substances. These included quartz crystals, which enshrined the colours and essence of the rainbow. In some regions they were obtained by medicine-men in pools at the foot of the rainbow, a great snake who linked earth and sky, and who was a source of life-giving power.

Unfortunately, this 'sky-hero' cult predominated in Eastern Australia, which was quickly subjected to European settlement. No one observed its rituals in their original completeness; no one studied its myths and doctrines. Its religious significance was not suspected. There were no material signs of religious observances, such as altars or temples, and questions failed to elicit a belief in a deity. And by the time anthropological field research was begun in Australia, the All-Father cults of Eastern Australia had almost ceased to exist.

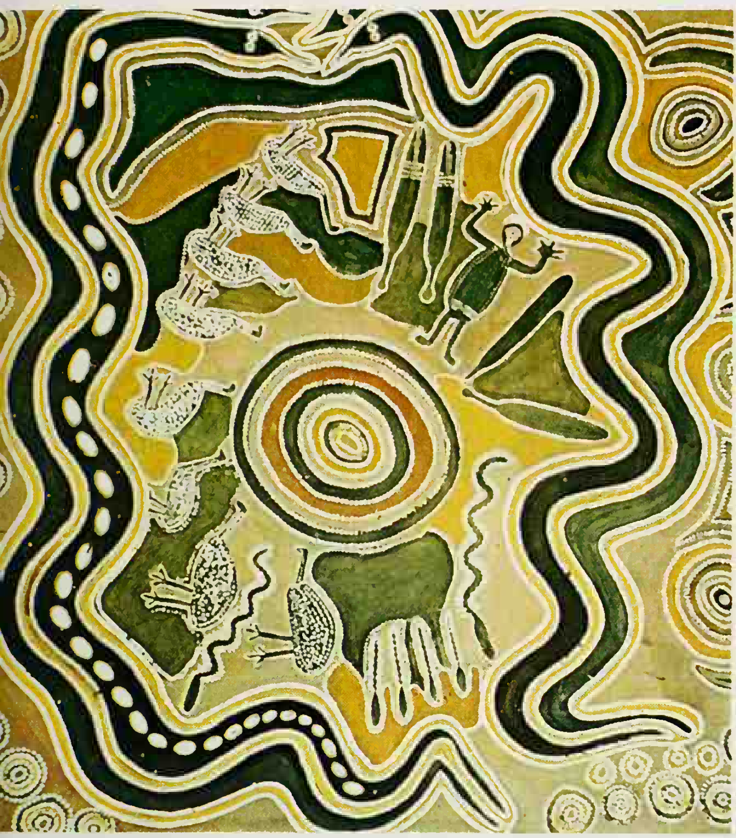
Dwellers in the Sky World

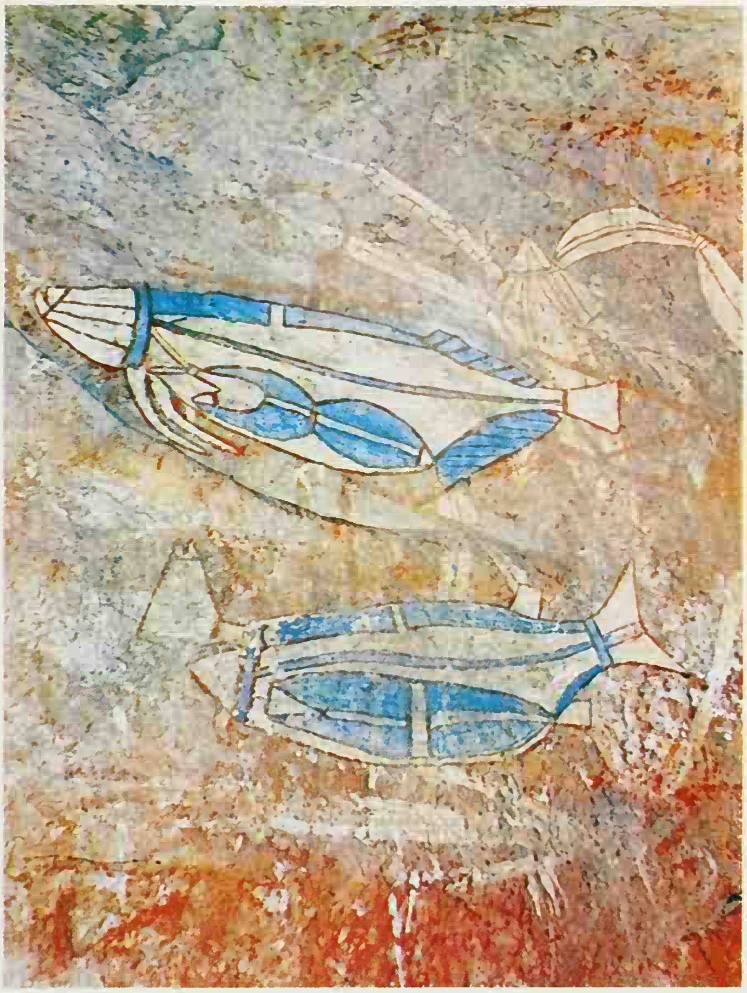
Although the cult of the sky-hero is limited to Eastern Australia, all over the continent the sky world is the scene of the activity of transformed and translated human and animal heroes of the Dreaming. Heavenly bodies and phenomena are seen as the outward appearances and actions of human-like persons, though endowed with greater powers. There the rainmen noisily roll their stones (the thunder clouds), hurl down stone axes which are thunderbolts, and pour out water. The sun, a female lighting her fire each morning, and the moon, a male rekindling and waving a torch, each in its cycle sinks down into a 'hole' in the horizon and rises up again.

The cycles of the heavenly bodies and the seasons must have contributed to the aboriginal idea of time as a continuing cycle. For them the present is not just the effect of what happened in a past Dreamtime but is that Dreamtime here and now. Time does not go on and on in serial order, but returns on itself. So too, human souls do not arise one from the other in a biological line but appear and reappear from the spirit-homes.

In aboriginal experience and thought, the sky on top and the earth below are one interconnected system, one world. This indeed is how it seems during the clear nights of inland Australia. Except during rain, the aborigines rest and sleep in the open, with nothing between themselves and the sky but space. Yet space is not void; the shooting stars are spirits of the recently dead moving through it.

Other stars and groups of stars are the subjects of myths and have their own Dreaming explanations. In the region south and east of Broome in Western Australia,





Cave and bark paintings are important in aboriginal religion. *Above* Snakes of an aboriginal fertility cult, painted on board, from Arnhem Land *Right* Cave-painting of Barramundi fish at Nourlangie Rock, south-east of Darwin. One convention of aboriginal art is that the skeletons of animals and fish are often revealed, as if they had been X-rayed

two dingos 'arose' out of the ground; they became gigantic men as tall as the sky. They are the *Baga-djimbiri*. As they travelled along the coast, they named animals and plants, and made springs of water by driving sacred pointed boards into the ground; they saw, but avoided, some women in the west who were digging for locusts; they cooked wattle seed, after realizing that trying to eat it uncooked was a mistake; they lost a hitting stick which local men later saw and copied, and which is represented in the sky as the pointers to the Southern Cross; they instituted the initiation rite of circumcision with the stone knife. A large bullroarer which they whirled flew into the sky to become a black patch in the Milky Way. In their travels they also speared a large kangaroo which hopped up to be the Coal Sack beside the Southern Cross. And so the two *Baga-djimbiri* went on until one day they laughed at a native cat-man. He and his group speared them. Their bodies became watersnakes, and their spirits went up above: they are the Magellan clouds.

Keeping the Wandjina Whole

Mythological systems vary in Australia. New sets of beliefs and rituals have been developed here or there, or else introduced from outside. Two of the most interesting new cults are in the Northern Kimberley area and in Arnhem Land.

In the former region, in the Dreaming, the ancestors of the clans arrived on the coast led by individuals called Wandjina, each with his own name. They moved in groups about this very rugged country, meeting with varied experiences, some of heroic magnitude, until each band or clan settled down in a particular part of the region. In time the Wandjina died, and he, she or they became a painting on a cave or rock shelter in the clan country. The Wandjina was usually represented lying down, bust or head only, but the mouth was (and is) always missing.

The spirit of the Wandjina went into a nearby water-place, from which it (or they) would issue to vitalize its painting. For the Wandjina were and still are Dreaming. Associated with rain, the rainbow and the sky, and therefore with the cycle of the seasons, their potency is ever present. Man's duty, clan by clan, is to retouch the paintings with ochres and pipeclay each year as the wet season approaches, thus ensuring that they are whole; then the power of the Dreaming becomes operative, as in the days when the Wandjina walked on the earth. The rains will fall, vegetation will grow, animal and bird life will abound.

The Fertility Mother

In Australia male figures are dominant in mythology; women, when present, usually play subordinate roles. But not so in Arnhem Land. There the myths centre on the Great Mother who arrived from the sea and, moving from place to place, gave birth to groups of human beings in what became the countries of particular clans and tribes, each with its own language.

A male consort, companion or brother is sometimes mentioned, but he is well in the background. In spite of this, in the rituals and in some of the myths, a great snake plays an important part. He is the Python, the Rainbow or Lightning Snake. 'When he raises his lengthening body from the springs, billabongs and rivers to the sky, flashing and roaring, the rains and floods come, and with them the wet season and the promise of life and increase for nature and man.' For as the wet season proceeds, the Mother, the Earth, brings forth food for man.

There are local variations of this basic theme. In north-eastern Arnhem Land the Mother's role is taken by two sisters, the *Djanggawul*, who with their brother came to the Gulf of Carpentaria coast by canoe from Beralgu, the island of the dead. In one version of the story, they are called the Daughters of the Sun, which left its home to rise up for them and warmed their backs as they rowed and rowed on to the Place of the Sun at Port Bradshaw. And yet they were also the Daughters of the Morning Star, which guided them as they paddled their way across the sea through the night.

Another variation is the widespread cult of the Mother Kunapipi, the ritual of which has striking parallels to elements in the classical mystery religions of Europe. Coming from across the sea, Kunapipi landed either in the lower Roper River or the Victoria River area. She was accompanied by a band of left-handed boomerang throwers who cleared a road through the

The Magician

(An aborigine named Kurkutji described how two spirits, Mundadji and Munkaninji, gave him magical powers. He came on them in a cave, where Mundadji caught him by the neck and killed him.)

Mundadji cut him open, right down the middle line, took out all of his insides and exchanged them for those of himself, which he placed in the body of Kurkutji. At the same time he put a number of sacred stones in his body. After it was all over the youngest spirit, Munkaninji, came up and restored him to life, told him that he was now a medicine-man, and showed him how to extract bones and other forms of evil magic out of men. Then he took him away up into the sky and brought him down to earth close to his own camp, where he heard the natives mourning for him, thinking that he was dead. For a long time he remained in a more or less dazed condition, but gradually he recovered and the natives knew that he had been made into a medicine-man. When he operates the spirit Munkaninji is supposed to be near at hand watching him; unseen of course by ordinary people.

When taking a bone out, an operation usually conducted under the cover of darkness, Kurkutji first of all sucks very hard at the stomach of the patient and removes a certain amount of blood. Then he makes passes over the body, punches, pounds and sucks, until at last the bone comes out and is then immediately, before it can be seen by the onlookers, thrown in the direction of the spot at which Munkaninji is sitting down quietly watching. Kurkutji then tells the natives that he must go and ask Munkaninji if he will be so kind as to allow him, Kurkutji, to show the bone to them, and permission having been granted, he goes to the spot at which he has, presumably, previously deposited one, and returns with it.

B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen
The Northern Tribes of Central Australia

timber, and also by a group of desirable young women. These were her first-born children but she gave birth to many more at various places in her travels. She also performed the now popular Kunapipi secret ritual, in which those who are to be initiated at one stage enter a crescent-shaped trench which symbolizes Kunapipi's womb, from which they emerge ritually reborn. While still in the womb each is given a wooden bullroarer to swing. As he does so, his spirit double enters it, and remains with the bullroarer in the trench when the initiate is 'reborn'. After the bullroarer disintegrates, this spirit double goes to the place of 'shades', the spirit centre, there to wait until the individual's death and burial ritual. The latter frees the flesh-soul, which then joins the double and becomes one with it again, and so awaits reincarnation.

Medicine-Men and Society

In their mythology and thinking, the aborigines have not considered the ultimate problem of the origin of the world and of life. The earth and sky exist. The Dreaming heroes merely change the outward shape of what is. Rivers and valleys, hills and rocks, anthills and trees, are formed by their movements and in some cases by the transformation of their own bodies. Similarly, the heroes themselves are not created. They too exist; they appear from the ground, the sea, the sky, and bring with them the pre-existent life-entities or spirits of all that will be, man or animal, bird or fish, insect or plant.

But the aborigines have tried to come to terms with the contingencies which face all human beings: death and disease. The aged must die and wait resignedly to 'finish'. The person wounded in a fight might die: there is nothing mysterious about it, and he can be revenged. The failure of many infants and young children to survive is accepted: they will be born again. And there is nothing suspicious about ordinary aches and pains; if bad enough they are treated with folk medicine. But for serious disturbances of a person's health and for death in the prime of life, they seek causes which they understand, namely, men (sometimes women) or spirits. In other words, the individual is sick, or has met with a serious accident, or has died because he is the victim of black magic. Some person of evil intent may have performed a magical rite on his footprint, or burnt and stabbed a small 'image' of him, singing the prescribed chant, thus causing him to burn inwardly and die. The important feature is the 'singing' and the intention or projection of the performer's desire.

This is most clear in 'bone-pointing'. A pointed bone or stick, usually with a piece of wax at the throwing end, is directed and jerked towards the victim to the accompaniment of action and chant. The projection of magic power must not be undertaken lightly. In one region, the performer must take care that the moon or sun is behind him and that there is no waterhole in front, or he will be struck himself. The pointing-bone releases from itself a kind of invisible spear which implants a bone or splinter in the victim without leaving a mark on the skin. In the same way stones and other forms of 'badness' can be projected.

A very frightening type of black magic is the extraction of a person's kidney or caul fat, or blood from the heart, again without leaving a mark but with fatal result.If a person thinks that his ailment or injury is the result of black magic, he resigns himself to death. In this and other cases of illness caused by projection magic, the medicine-man may effect a cure by extracting from the victim the bone or other object which had been hurled invisibly into him. Much 'bedside manner' is employed, and sleight-of-hand is used to extract the offending object, by rubbing and sucking the affected part, and to show it to the sufferer. In other cases the medicine-man extracts the 'badness' and with obvious care hurls it away, or he sets out after a dying person's soul and, if successful in catching it, restores it.

In case of death, a medicine-man acts as coroner. Being clever, he can see the spirit doubles or 'shades' of people, including that of a murderer. He may use other methods of inquest, which imply that the soul of the dead person remains with the body for a time: it may answer his questions in a code which he can interpret. And as he is 'clever' and has a good idea of the jealousies, quarrels and enmities within and between groups, he puts the responsibility for a death on someone whom his fellows will accept as the culprit. The significance of the decisions and practices of medicine-men, and of their verdicts when acting as coroners, is clear. Through them and the underlying accepted beliefs, both the individuals and the community cope psychologically and socially with the undesirable but inevitable contingencies of life.

The aboriginal population has been increasingly affected by introduced disease and by the whites who have immigrated over the last two centuries, and today aborigines who live in towns occupy the lowest position in society, while those based in reserves suffer a high rate of suicide and addiction to alcohol and other drugs.

Despite this (and despite the effects of continuing Christian missionary pressure on their culture) some, especially those living in the barren areas of central, northern and western Australia, have managed to maintain much of their indigenous way of life. But, just as aboriginal culture was not static before the arrival of the whites, so today it evolves and adapts to changing circumstances.

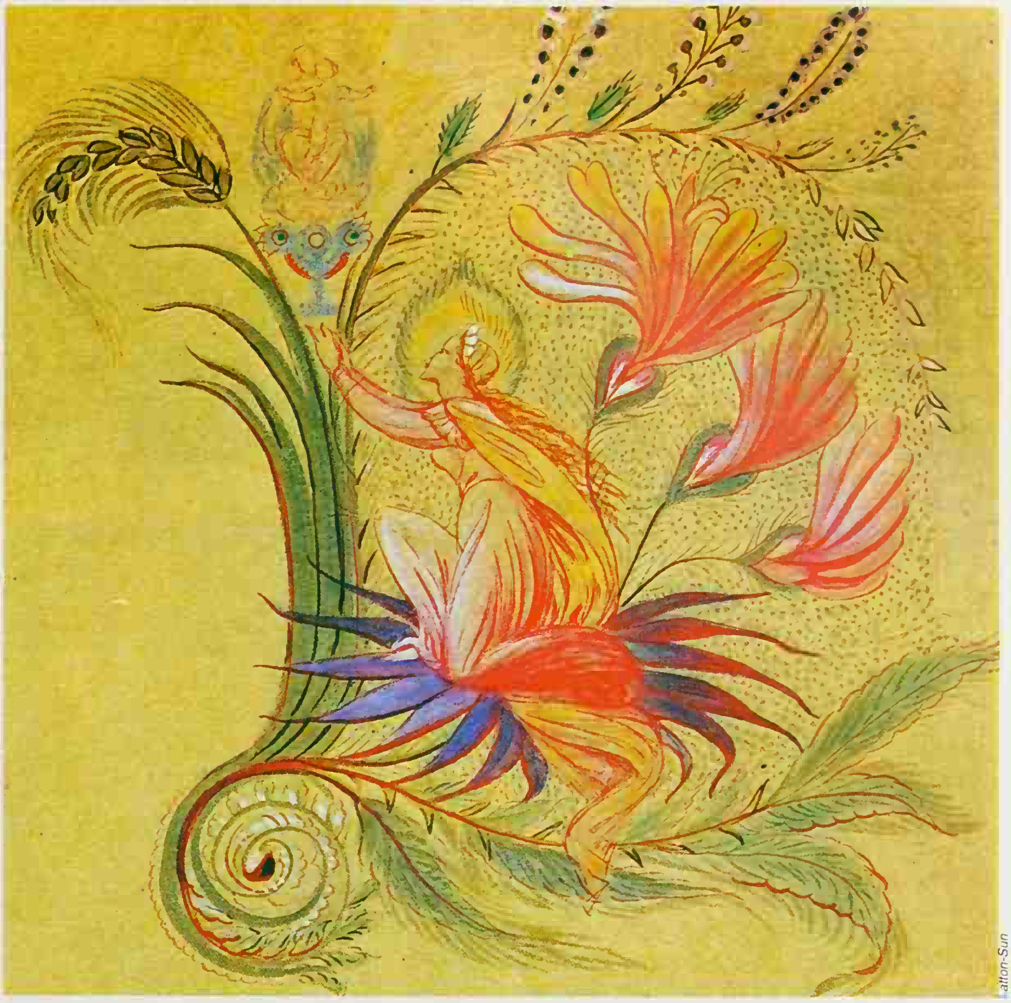
In North Arnhem Land, for instance, because women and uninitiated young men have recently learnt some of the 'secrets' previously exclusive to initiated men, the elders of the community have created new 'secrets', ones which are only divulged to those who undergo initiation. In this and other areas aborigines have come, in the last two decades, to take a greater pride in their customs and, as a way of strengthening their group identity in the face of the immigrants, have revived some of their rituals and other traditional activities. As the original inhabitors of Australia, they do not want to see the valued ways of their ancestors lost for the sake of a beer-bottle or petrol can.

A.P.ELKIN*

FURTHER READING: A. P. Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines* (Doubleday, 1964) and *Aboriginal Men of High Degree* (St. Martin's, 1978); R. M. Berndt, *Kunapipi* (Melbourne, 1951); the same author's *Djanggawul* (Routledge, 1952) contains a fine translation of the Djanggawul chants. T. G. H. Strehlow, *Aranda Traditions* (Johnson Reprint, 1968); Ursula McConnel, *Myths of the Mungkan* (Melbourne University Press, 1957). See also *Australian Aboriginal Mythology*, edited by L. R. Hiatt (Humanities, 1975); Max Charlesworth ed, *Religion in Aboriginal Australia* (Univ. of Queensland, 1984); and Howard Morphy, *Ancestral Connections* (Univ. of Chicago, 1991).

Cases in which the subconscious, telepathy or a dead soul seems to be guiding the hand of an artist or writer are among the most fascinating and baffling problems of psychical research

AUTOMATIC ART



atton-Sun

'Automatic' painting by Mrs Alaric Watts, a late 19th century amateur artist who found that, when sketching, her pencil would begin to move by itself. When painting, she prepared colours on her palette and let her hand be 'guided' to choose them

THE TERM 'AUTOMATIC' applied to writing, speaking, painting, drawing and music means the production of work not consciously directed by the person whose hand executed it. It belongs to, and cannot be sharply separated from, a whole range of phenomena commonly regarded by psychologists as manifestations of layers of the personality which are subconscious or dissociated, cut off from the conscious mind. This includes habitual tics, loss of memory, sleep-walking, multiple personality, 'speaking in tongues', prophecy, and mediumship in trance.

It is quite impossible to generalize about the automatist's state of mind during the production of automatic writing and drawings. Some go into a deep trance and are quite oblivious of their surroundings; some are drowsy but partially aware of what is going on; some are awake but abstracted; and some are fully conscious and may read or talk normally. Some automatists are aware of the movements of the hand and of what it is writing or drawing; some are conscious but quite insensible of what is written or drawn and some are unaware even that their hands are moving.

In their early stages automatic writing and drawing are generally very crude and monotonous; they may begin with incessant repetition of the same figure or letter, and they often proceed no further than the production of a few empty phrases or irregular shapes. But in a few cases the automatist comes in time to exhibit skill or knowledge beyond his ordinary capacities. Automatic writing has been known to report events forgotten or unnoticed by the waking self, to produce fragments of languages not consciously known to the writer, and to exhibit what look like flashes of telepathy. The writing not infrequently develops a 'character' of its own, professing beliefs and opinions differing from those of the automatist and sometimes it will display a much greater fluency in composition.

Inspiration from the Dead

Automatic writing may not merely possess a character of its own, it is liable to claim an origin from some source other than the automatist – perhaps a supernatural being, a dead person, or even a person still living. This fact, in combination with the heightened faculties often exhibited, has made automatic writing (together with some of the related phenomena mentioned earlier) an important influence in the development of certain religious movements, particularly modern Spiritualism (see SPIRITUALISM).

The majority of published automatic scripts fall into one or two classes. The first class consists of moral and religious precepts and accounts of the nature of the next world and of life in it, purportedly coming from deceased persons. The religious teachings and the accounts of the next world vary in detail from one automatist to another, but on the whole the general resemblances outweigh the individual differences, and the similarities of tone are often striking. As the American philosopher William James remarked, automatic scripts and utterances abound 'in a curiously vague optimistic philosophy-and-water, in which phrases about spirit, harmony, beauty, law, development, keep recurring. It seems exactly as if one author composed more than half of the trance messages.'

Some notable productions of this type are *Spirit Teachings* (1873) by W. Stainton Moses, the 'Bible' of British Spiritualism; W. T. Stead's *After Death* (1897); Miss K. Wingfield's *Guidance from Beyond* (1923); and two books by Geraldine Cummins, *The Road to Immortality* (1932) and *Beyond Human Personality* (1935).

A contemporary variant of these philosophico-religious writings is the phenomenon of 'channeling' that has been such a feature of New Age movements. In channeling, some departed sage, now on a higher plane of being, speaks through a medium who acts as the 'channel' for the transmission of his (generally unremarkable) wisdom.

It is characteristic of these sages that, as Robert A.Baker has put it, their identities are 'buried forever in timeless mud and sand, safely beyond the possibility of any historical resuscitation and denial'. In this they contrast somewhat unfavourably with some of the spirits who communicated through the automatists just mentioned.

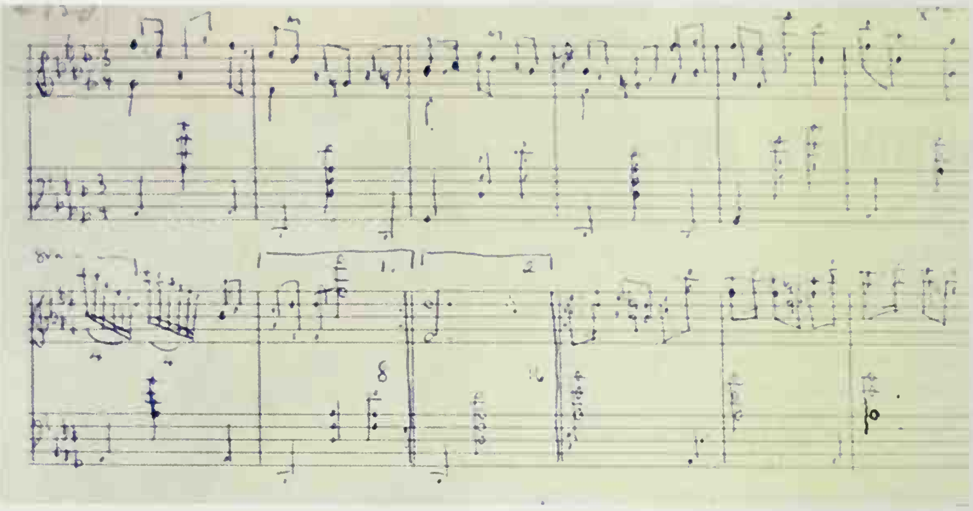
The second major category of automatic writings consists of poetry, plays and (especially) historical romances, commonly related from the standpoint of some deceased person possessing first-hand information or enhanced knowledge of the events and periods concerned. There is no doubt that such writings sometimes display knowledge, dramatic flair or literary gifts in excess of those which the automatist ordinarily possesses. Among the more interesting examples are works by Hélène Smith (in T. Flournoy, *From India to the Planet Mars*, 1900); by Geraldine Cummins (*The Scripts of Cleophas*, 1928; *When Nero was Dictator*, 1939), and by Mrs J. H. Curran (*The Sorry Tale*, 1917; *Hope Trueblood*, 1918; *Telka*, 1928).

The Story of Patience Worth

The writings of Mrs Curran achieved in their day considerable celebrity, and they have been the subject of a number of serious studies (e.g. W. F. Prince, *The Case of Patience Worth*, 1927; I. Litvag, *Singer in the Shadows: the Strange Story of Patience Worth*, 1972). Mrs Curran, a housewife from

St Louis, Missouri, began experimenting with a ouija board (see OUIJA BOARDS) in 1913. She started to receive communications from a deceased English girl, Patience Worth, who had supposedly lived in the 17th century. Patience produced, sometimes at extraordinary speed, a series of historical novels, very varied in style and setting, and considerable quantities of poetry. She also showed a remarkable ability to extemporise poems on topics suggested by persons present.

While operating the ouija board, Mrs Curran remained fully conscious of her surroundings, though not of the impending words. However, after some years she came little by little to speak, first letters and then words as they came into her mind; the communications became more and more adumbrated, and accompanied by spontaneous pictures that seem to have reached an almost hallucinatory tendency.



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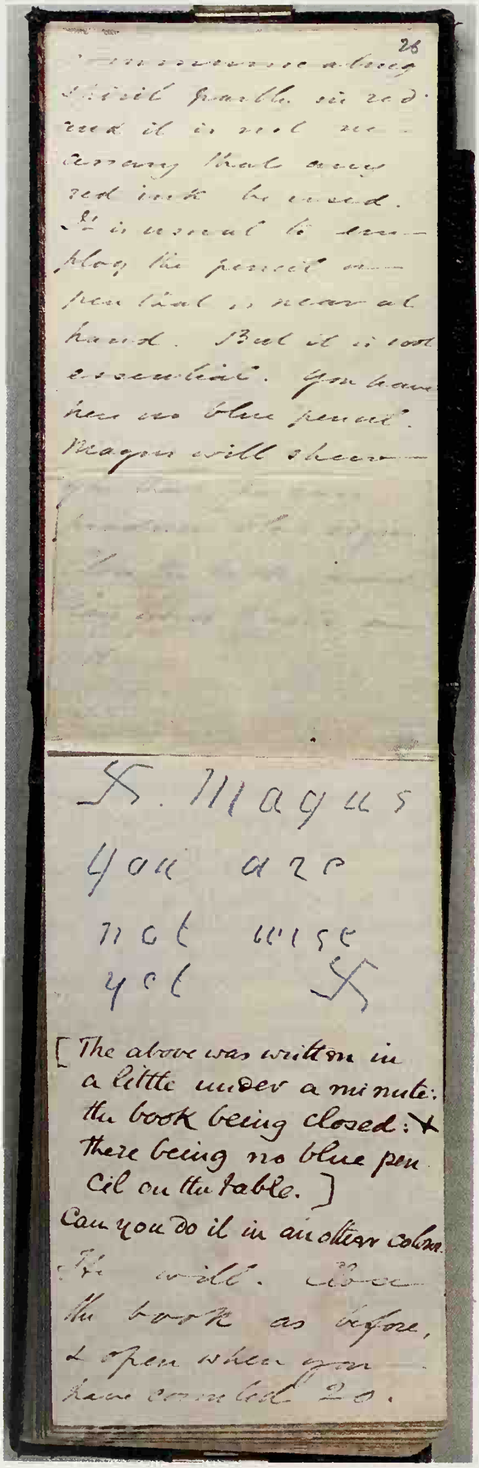


[illegible] along
[illegible] possible in red.
red it is not ne-
cessary that any
red ink be used.
It is usual to em-
ploy the pencil or
pen that is near at
hand. But it is not
essential. You have
here no blue pencil.
Magus will show—

卐. Magus
you are
not wise
yet 卐

[The above was written in
a little under a minute:
the book being closed: &
there being no blue pen
cil on the table.]
Can you do it in another colour.
We will. Close
the book as before,
& open when you
have counted 20.

Mary Evans Picture Library

Above **Part of the manuscript of a mazurka by Chopin, transcribed by Rosemary Brown in the course of a television interview** ***Left*** **Two pages from the notebooks of Stainton Moses**

Painting in the Dark

Like automatic writings, automatic drawings may be superior to anything which the automatist can accomplish in a normal state. The development of automatic drawing is often preceded and accompanied by the development of automatic writing. For instance, the complicated symbolic drawings described in two famous early British works, W. M. Wilkinson's *Spirit Drawings* (1858) and Mrs de Morgan's *From Matter to Spirit* (1863) were preceded and subsequently interpreted by automatic writing. Automatic drawing sometimes develops into automatic painting, but automatic painting has also, and perhaps more often, been known to develop independently. A curious feature of certain instances of automatic painting has been not merely that the paintings were executed with unusual speed, but that they were allegedly produced in the dark, as in the cases of David Duguid of Glasgow in the 1870-80s and of Marjan Gruzewski, a Pole, during the 1920-30s.

A distinction can be made between cases of automatic drawing and painting, and cases of 'psychic art' in which a clairvoyant or sensitive gifted in the use of crayon or brush has sketched some spirit or otherworldly scene allegedly revealed to him by his supernormal faculties. Many of William Blake's pictures belong in this class. However, it is probable that no sharp line can be drawn between automatic drawing and painting and the 'psychic' drawing or painting of clairvoyants, for many 'psychic artists' would claim not merely to discern the subjects of their sketches by some form of non-sensory perception, but to be inspired or 'overshadowed' by departed spirits (often those of famous artists).

Madge Gill, an uneducated London housewife whose drawings attracted some notice (she died in 1961), worked in a state of semi-trance, and said that she 'felt impelled to execute drawings on a large scale...I am undoubtedly guided by an unseen force'. The contemporary British psychic Matthew Manning (see MANNING) has produced a large collection of paintings and drawings in a variety of styles inspired by his concentration on the creative force of dead artists such as Picasso, Arthur Rackham, Paul Klee, Albrecht Dürer, Aubrey Beardsley and Leonardo da Vinci.

In addition to cases of automatic speaking, writing, drawing and painting, there have also been cases of the automatic playing and composing of music. The best-known recent case has been that of Mrs Rosemary Brown, a middle-aged lady of some (but not extensive) musical education, whose book, *Unfinished Symphonies*, appeared in 1971. Mrs Brown believed that from the age of seven onward she had been in touch with the deceased composer Franz Liszt, whom she could both see and hear. She believed that at times Liszt guided her hands as she played or wrote music; but more often he dictated compositions to her, as did other composers (Brahms, Debussy, Beethoven, Chopin, Stravinsky) whom he brought with him. Expert opinions as to the merits of the music vary considerably.

As the 19th century wore on, observations of hysterical and brain-damaged patients, and experiments on various hypnotic phenomena, made it conceivable that intelligent activities can occur of which a person is unaware; and such activities may exhibit knowledge and dramatic gifts which the person does not ordinarily possess.

These findings made the Spiritualist interpretation of automatic writing, drawing and painting seem less compelling. They led to a demand that automatic writings should be 'evidential', which means that the deceased persons who purportedly inspired them should establish their identities conclusively by giving correct information about themselves which could not possibly have been known to the automatist, consciously or unconsciously.

Suicide in Baker Street

One of the first automatists to produce what at first appeared to be evidence of this kind was W. Stainton Moses (see his book *Spirit Identity*, published in 1878). The spirits who purported to 'control' Moses's hand during his automatic writing, or to 'communicate' through him as a medium by means of table-tilting and raps, were sometimes persons apparently unknown to him; and yet occasionally they gave information about themselves which it was subsequently possible to verify. For example, on the evening of 21 February 1874 Moses, at a party of friends in Grosvenor Square, London, suddenly felt impelled to sit down and write. His hand drew a rough sketch of an object which resembled a horse fastened to a kind of truck, and then wrote some disjointed sentences which purported to come from a man who had committed suicide that morning. The man said that he had killed himself under a steam roller in Baker Street (down which, admittedly, Moses himself had passed in the afternoon). Subsequent inquiry revealed that a man had indeed committed suicide there that morning by throwing himself under a steam roller. On the front of the steam roller was the brass figure of a horse.

The Thompson-Gifford Case

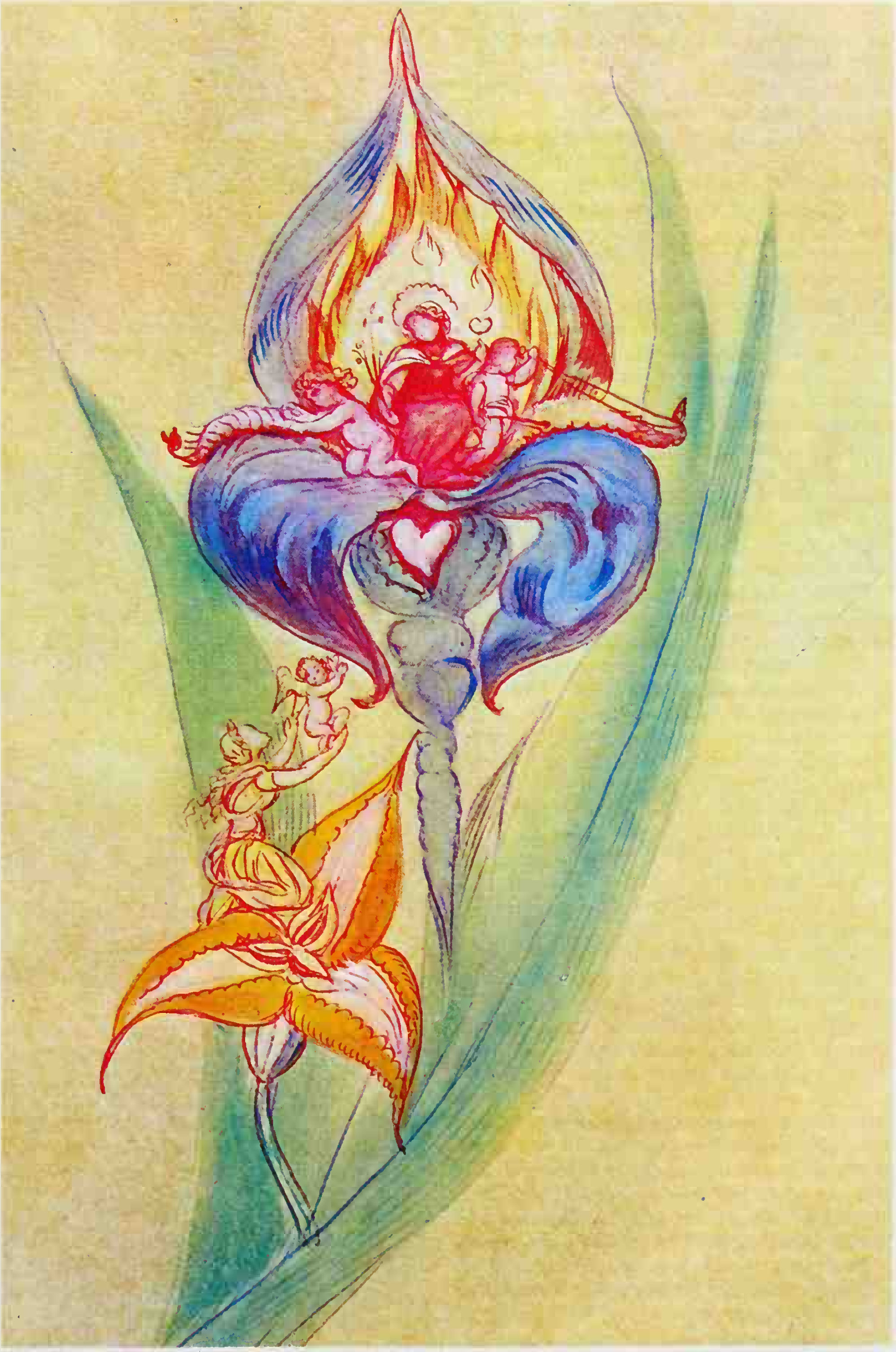
There have been similar cases in connection with other automatists, but the difficulty with these 'drop-in communicators' is that one can hardly ever be completely certain that the information they give about themselves could not have come within the automatist's ken and have been subconsciously stored away. The famous American clairvoyant and trance medium, Eileen Garrett, has said that outbursts of automatic drawing or writing have occurred to her, but she has not seen them as spirit messages. She believes that they, and her controls as well, are properties or personalities from her own unconscious mind – or, in her own words, they are 'working symbols of the subconscious'.

Drawing as well as writing has figured in a number of 'evidential' cases, and painting was central to the famous 'Thompson-Gifford' case. In 1905 a goldsmith named Frederic L. Thompson found himself overwhelmed with the urge to paint pictures. He also began to suffer from hallucinations of trees and landscapes, hallucinations which served as a basis for some of his pictures. The following year he visited an exhibition of paintings by an artist named Robert Swain Gifford who had died some while previously. He there heard a hallucinatory voice which said to him: 'You see what I have done. Can you not take up and finish my work?' Thereafter Thompson's impulse to paint became even stronger, and certain scenes impressed themselves on him especially. After some months it was discovered that his paintings of these scenes closely resembled scenes which had been very well known to the deceased Robert Swain Gifford in life. The resemblances between photographs of these scenes and Thompson's paintings is so striking that a casual observer could suppose that the pictures were based on the actual scenes, or else on the photographs. Thus Thompson had perceived in the form of hallucinations, and had felt impelled to paint, scenes resembling places well known to Gifford, but which Thompson had apparently never visited or seen in photographs.

The Telepathy Theory

The argument that automatists in fact derive their seemingly enhanced knowledge from their own subconscious memories cannot be convincingly applied to cases such as that of the celebrated American medium, Mrs Piper (see PIPER). Mrs Piper was studied and supervised by prominent psychical researchers from about 1885 to 1915. They were in the habit of regularly bringing to sit with her persons quite unknown to her who were introduced to her under pseudonyms. Despite these precautions, Mrs Piper was time and again able, by automatic painting or speaking, to give correct information about the deceased friends and relatives of these sitters.

It can hardly be supposed that, even if Mrs Piper had somehow managed to penetrate the anonymity of all these sitters, she could previously have gleaned by ordinary means, and consciously or subconsciously



Layton-Sun

Right **This colourful design was drawn automatically by Miss Emily A. Tallmadge of New York City. She believed that her drawings were inspired by spirit guides, who also conveyed the symbolism which is shown in some of her work and which, she said, had been 'handed down through aeons of time'. Miss Tallmadge, who never studied drawing or painting, produced thousands of intricate pictures, no two of which were the same, before her death in 1956 at the age of 82.** ***By permission of Mrs Harold Hunt***

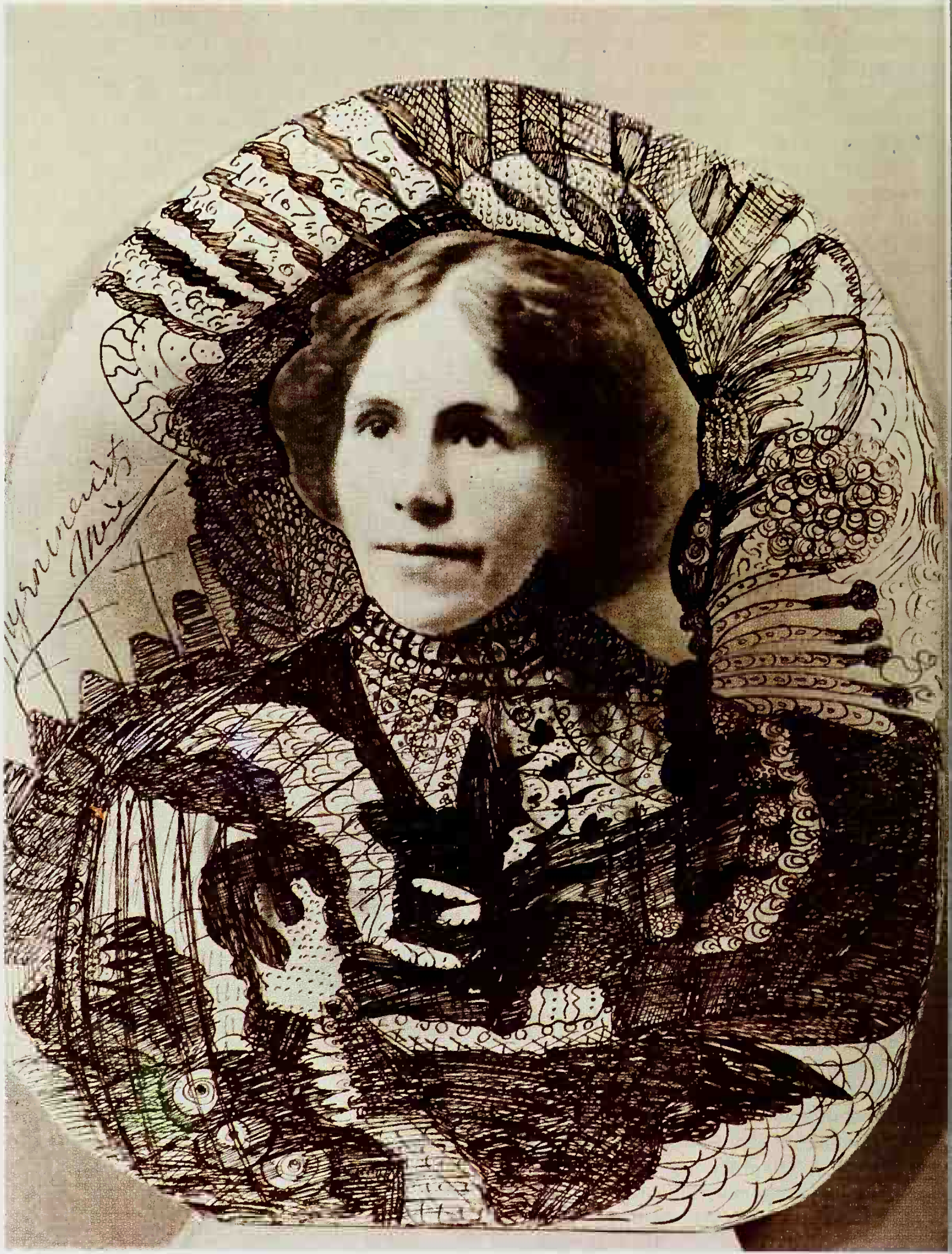
retained, the information necessary to ensure success in such a large number of cases. Of course if we admit the possibility of telepathy, then another explanation of Mrs Piper's successes becomes feasible; namely that she obtained the necessary information telepathically from the sitters themselves. But in some instances Mrs Piper seems definitely to have given, as if from a deceased person, information not conceivably known to the sitters present.

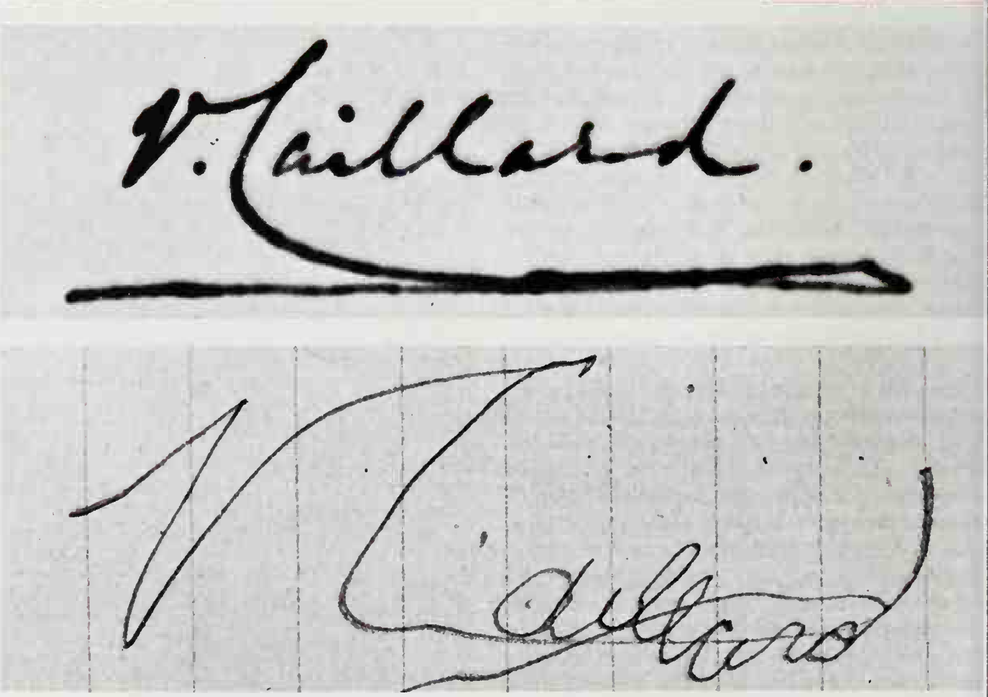
Perhaps the most curious of all automatic writings are the series of interlinked scripts produced in the early years of this century by a number of automatists connected with the Society for Psychical Research. With one exception – Mrs Piper – they were not professional mediums, principal automatists being Mrs Verrall, Mrs Coombe-Tennant ('Mrs Willett'), Miss Helen Verrall (Mrs W. H. Salter), Mrs Fleming ('Mrs Holland') and Mrs Stuart Wilson. The scripts which they produced, or at least the portions of them we are here concerned with, purported to be inspired by a group of deceased friends, two of whom, F. W. H. Myers and Edmund Gurney, had taken a prominent part in the early history of the Society for Psychical Research.

In order to provide evidence of human survival of bodily death, this group of deceased persons allegedly hit upon an ingenious scheme. They sent to their friends still on earth, using different mediums, various parts of one communication (or else a series of related communications) so that the significance of the whole could only be perceived when the separate communications were compared. And in a number of cases – the so-called 'cross-correspondences' (see CROSS-CORRESPONDENCES) – the ostensible communicators might be thought to have succeeded.

These cases are often extremely complex and many involve recondite allusions to classical literature. An interesting example of these 'concordant automatisms', as they are called, is the following. On 16 April 1907 Mrs Fleming (in India) wrote an automatic script which contained the words 'Maurice. Morris. Mors. And with that the shadow of death fell upon him.' *Mors* is the Latin for 'death'. The following day Mrs Piper, emerging from trance, spoke the words 'Sanatos' and then 'Tanatos'. On 23 April, again when emerging from trance, she spoke the word 'Thanatos', which is the Greek for 'death'.

On 29 April Mrs Verrall's hand wrote a slightly garbled quotation from Walter Savage Landor: 'Warmed both hands before the Fire of Life, it fails and I am ready to depart.' She then drew the Greek letter delta, which had always been a symbol of




V. Caillard.
V Caillard

Above right **Self-portrait by Madge Gill. the London housewife who died in 1961 after producing hundreds of automatic drawings, many of which she attributed to a spirit called Myrninerest *Right* Some spirits of the dead are said to guide the hands of the living, but others are alleged to be able to write themselves. The signature (above) of the British industrialist Sir Vincent Caillard, and (below) his signature supposedly written by his spirit at a seance**

death to her. Next she wrote *Manibus date lilia plenis* ('give lilies with full hands'), a quotation from a passage in Virgil's *Aeneid* foretelling the early death of Marcellus, nephew of the Emperor Augustus. Shortly after this she wrote 'Come away, Come away' (the first four words of Shakespeare's 'Come away, come away death'), followed mmediately by *Pallida mors aequo pede pauperum, Tabernas regumque turres,* Put n *pulsat* ('Pale death stamps impartially upon the hovels of the poor and the towers of the rich'), a quotation from Horace. Finally she wrote, 'You have got the word plainly written all along in your writing. Look back.' None of the three ladies knew anything of what the others had written or said . Mrs Piper knew no Greek. The word 'death' occurred in Mrs Holland's scripts on only three occasions; in Mrs Verrall's scripts it occurred only once.

Many of the cross-correspondences are far more ingenious and remarkable. So it seems that the alternatives to a Spiritualist interpretation of automatic writing are not any easier to accept; for deliberate fraud is possible in only a small number of cases. But what makes the Spiritualist interpretation unacceptable to many researchers is the fact that the best cases are commonly found entangled with the worst. The most convincing of an automatist's 'communicators' will guarantee the credentials of the most implausible ones – a fact that opens up problems so complex it is difficult to see any way to approach them. ALAN GAULD

FURTHER READING: Important early material will be found in F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (Arno Press, 1975, 2 vols) and F. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, republished as *Mediums of the 19th Century*, edited by E. J. Dingwall, (University Books, 1963). On automatic writing, see: Anita Mühl, *Automatic Writing* (Helix Press, 1963). On mediums and automatists, see: Rosalind Heywood, *Beyond the Reach of Sense* (Dutton, 1961); and Alan Gauld, *Mediumship and Survival* (Heinemann, 1982).

In one of several outbreaks of supposed demonic possession in 17th century France, accusations of witchcraft and lesbianism were levelled at the Mother Superior of a convent

AUXONNE NUNS

THE DOCTRINE OF DEVILS which dominated clerical thinking in the Middle Ages was based on the belief that an immense army of demons, according to one estimate 7,405,926 strong, was engaged in a permanent attempt to corrupt the souls of men. Individual devils directed their assaults at the most vulnerable part of the human line of defence, the sexual front, and often aimed specifically at the inmates of nunneries who, denied the pleasures of love and the satisfaction of motherhood, were peculiarly susceptible to this type of attack.

During the Middle Ages, these sexual demons were kept at bay by a regime of fasting, scourging and blood-letting, but the later relaxation of the old harsh disciplines allowed waves of violent hysteria to rage through many convents, often taking the form of wild blasphemies, demented ravings and abandoned dancing in the nude: symptoms which were regarded as evidence of diabolic possession.

There was a series of notorious incidents n France in the 17th century; at Aix in 1611, at Loudun (see LOUDUN NUNS) in 1634, and at Louviers in 1647, which required the discipline of torture and the stake before they could be brought under control.

In 1660 a similar situation came to light at Auxonne, where the presence of a young priest, Father Nouvelet, as father confessor had for some years provided a focus for the explosive forces building up in the local Ursuline convent. Eight of the girls had fallen violently in love with him and he had become the object of erotic dreams, which were assumed to be of diabolic origin.

This situation was not only dangerous from a moral standpoint, but it contained a sinister threat to the priest himself. There were several previous examples of the likely fate of a man caught up in the nightmare world of cloistered female celibacy. In 17th century France, it had become almost an occupational hazard for a male confessor of nuns to be denounced, sooner or later, as a sorcerer by his charges.

Hysteria and Possession

For those who were enclosed in monastic orders, the opportunities of satisfying sexual appetites were even more limited, and especially perhaps for women, who could less easily take the initiative in such matters. Hence, while the records show plenty of cases of nuns and even abbesses becoming pregnant or being involved in scandal, we also find the sexual impulse emerging in the form of hysterical manifestations . . . It has long been recognized that people can (without conscious intention) induce in themselves various forms of illness and defects of function at the behest of an unconscious or repressed need. Thus a man who has seen a particularly terrifying sight may develop blindness, and this blindness will disappear as suddenly as it came, when the underlying anxiety has been dissipated. In a similar way, people sometimes become ill in order to escape from situations which they find intolerable – and the illness is quite genuine. Such hysterical seizures usually bear a close relationship to the unconscious fantasy: in particular, women sometimes exhibit convulsive bodily movements, or become rigid, with the body arched so that the pudenda are thrust forward as in coitus . . .

G. Rattray Taylor, *Sex in History*

Expelling Devils

Understandably, Father Nouvelet tried to stave off trouble by declaring that the nuns and he himself were all victims of witchcraft. Two peasant women were therefore charged with the crime and, when no evidence was offered against them, were sentenced to banishment. However, they were torn to pieces by a mob as they left the court. The problem of the possessed nuns had still to be solved. Father Nouvelet instituted his own highly specialized system for the expulsion of devils, which involved lying in bed with the girls, and conducting services during which they assumed erotic postures before the altar. This did not please the Mother Superior of the convent, Barbara Buvée, who was known as Sister St Colombe. She opposed the exorcisms, to the disgust of the girls who rounded on her with accusations of witchcraft and lesbianism. Lesbianism occurs only rarely in the scandals of the Church, though there had been a suggestion of lesbian infamies at Louviers, where the nuns had paraded naked at the instigation of their confessor, Father Boulle, who was afterwards burned alive. The Mother Superior was indicted for witchcraft on 28 October 1660, and was thrown into a cell and heavily chained. Her situation was hazardous, since she was already out of favour with the authorities, having been severely punished with floggings and fastings for insubordination.

The Evidence

On 5 January 1661, Barbara Buvée was brought to trial before the Parlement at Dijon. Evidence was submitted to the court that she and Sister Gabrielle de Malo had indulged in 'mutual touchings'. Sister Henriette Cousin described how the Mother Superior had not only kissed her passionately but had placed her hand on her bosom. Sister Humberte Borthon had seen visions of hell in which the Mother Superior lay down on her 'like a man on a woman'. Most shocking of all had been the vision of another sister, in which the Mother Superior had been seen carrying a stolen host in one hand and an artificial phallus in the other.

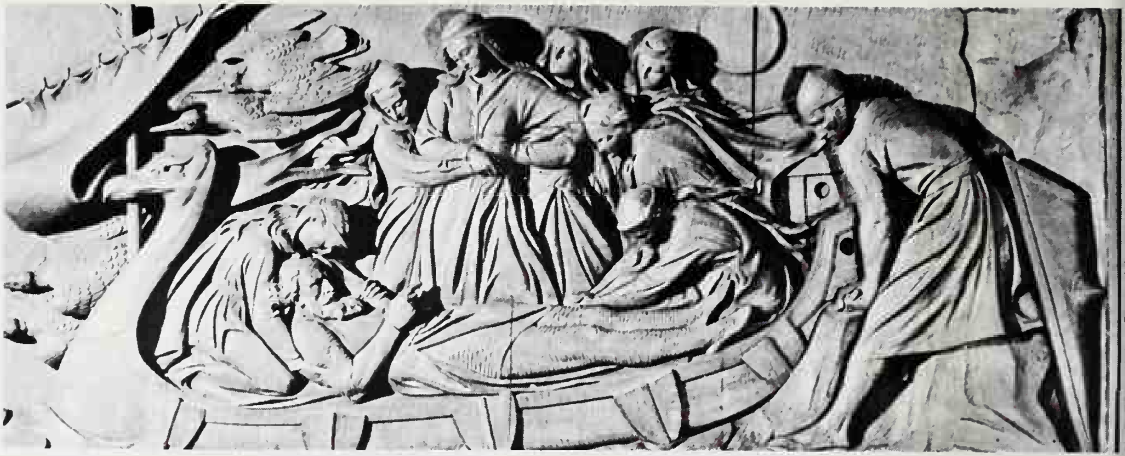
As the trial went on, evidence of an even more disturbing character came to light. It seemed that Asmodeus, the devil of lust, had penetrated the convent's defences and had indulged in bouts of sexual intercourse with Sister Francoise Borthon.

At any earlier period of French history this evidence would probably have proved conclusive but, fortunately for the Mother Superior, there was now a spirit of scepticism abroad and the court was by no means satisfied. In March the Parlement instituted a further inquiry. It appeared that the physicians who had examined the nuns were equally unconvinced by the evidence and there was even a suggestion that those of the nuns who were not mentally ill were probably outright frauds. One physician, it is true, considered the state of possession to be genuine . Finally on 15 June 1662, Dr Bachet reported that 'in all their acts, whether bodily or mental, the nuns have never displayed any legitimate or convincing sign of true demoniacal possession'.

Barbara Buvée was declared innocent and released from custody, but was sent to another convent, after which the disturbances at Auxonne gradually subsided.

Avalon

Paradise of Celtic legends, an island of apple trees situated in the far west to which King Arthur was taken after being mortally wounded; first mentioned in the 12th century by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who said the fairy queen Morgan ruled there; later thought to be the area round Glastonbury.
See APPLE; ARTHUR; GLASTONBURY



AXE

THE AXE WAS ONE of the first tools ever invented and even the earliest stone axes were probably thought to contain dynamic power, for on impact they emitted explosive noises and sparks reminiscent of the thunder and lightning of the storm gods, and they also destroyed enemies.

The coming of the Iron Age enhanced the magic power of the axe: partly because of the invincibility of the iron axe in battle and partly because of the reverence accorded to iron itself. The iron first used by man was meteoric in origin. It had come from heaven and so it was regarded as a metal of the gods (see IRON).

The Double Axe of Crete

The double-headed axe was an important symbol in the religion of ancient Crete. Double axes with thin and curving blades were an emblem of the great mother goddess, and a double axe was fixed to the top of a high pole, beneath which animals were sacrificed. Jacquetta Hawkes has suggested (in *Dawn of the Gods*) that the axe 'may have begun its evolution from a practical tool into a religious symbol as an instrument of sacrifice comparable to the cross. Its shape, the double triangle was widely used as a sign for woman, and the shaft thrust through the central perforation afforded an effective piece of sexual imagery.'

The double axe was called the *Labrys*, and the great palace of the Cretan kings at Cnossus was known as the Labyrinth, meaning 'House of the Double Axe'. Labyrinth did not come to mean maze until later, perhaps because of the intricate and maze-like construction of the palace, with its numerous rooms and corridors.

The symbol of the double axe has been found branded into skulls in cemeteries of the New Stone Age in France, and carved on the pillars of Stonehenge.

The use of the axe as an instrument of sacrifice is illustrated by the curious ceremony of the *bouphonia* at Athens, in which an ox approached the altar 'of its own accord' and ate the corn on the altar. The ox was slaughtered by a priest, who then went away into voluntary exile. The axe with which he had killed the beast was condemned as 'guilty' and thrown into the sea.

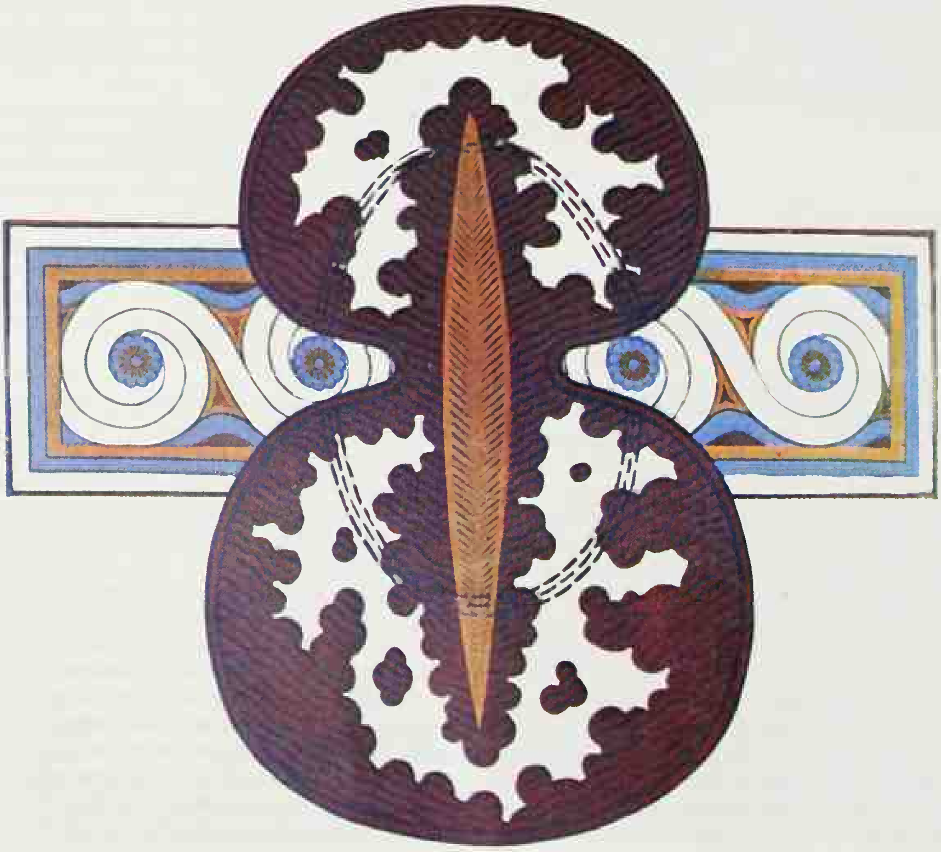
Among the Thugs of medieval India (see THUGS), the pickaxe was regarded as sacred: on initiation each member of the society received one that had peen passed seven times through fire to consecrate it.

Axinomancy

Various forms of divination make use of an axe. To find buried treasure, a round agate is put on the red-hot edge of an axe set upright on the ground. If the agate adheres to the axe, it is an indication that you must look elsewhere. But if the agate falls and rolls three times in the same direction, this points where the treasure is buried.

For the detection of thieves, which was a constant preoccupation of magicians before the rise of scientific criminology, an axe was left standing head downwards on the ground. The interested parties then danced in a circle around it until it tottered and fell. The direction in which the handle then pointed indicated the thief. The axe was also important in witchcraft. Witches would strike an axe into an upright post and 'milk' the handle. The result was magically to milk dry every cow in the neighbourhood .

The axe appears frequently in folk customs. People in the southern United States are said to believe that walking through a house carrying an axe can bring disaster : an ingenious theory, which combines fear of iron, terror of a cutting edge and the traditional awe of the axe. It is also said that to dream of an axe is a warning of danger or death, and in a modern dictionary of dreams published in Britain the axe is said to mean 'danger to a friend'.



Picturepoint London

An important symbol in Cretan religion was the double-headed axe. It may have evolved from a tool into a religious symbol as a result of its use as an instrument of sacrifice

AYURVEDA

ONE OF THE OLDEST systems of medicine known, ayurveda is predominantly practised in the Indian subcontinent, but has been adopted increasingly in the west in recent years. *Ayur* means 'life' and *veda* means 'knowledge', so ayurveda means applying knowledge to the maintenance of the life force. This form of medical treatment is based on passages from the *Atharava-veda*, one of the oldest scriptures of the Hindus dating back some 3,000 years. The key authors who formalized these principles are Susruta (fifth century BC), Caraka (second century BC) and Vaghbata (c625 AD), who all wrote *Samhitas* or encyclopaedias of Ayurvedic practice. Intermixed with these traditions are some of the methods, plants and drugs of the Yunani system of medicine introduced into India by the Moslem practitioners of the Moghul invaders.

Ayurveda is 'holistic' in that it treats the whole individual, seeking to restore and maintain health by balancing the the elements of the body, rather than by attacking individual symptoms as does western 'allopathic' medicine.

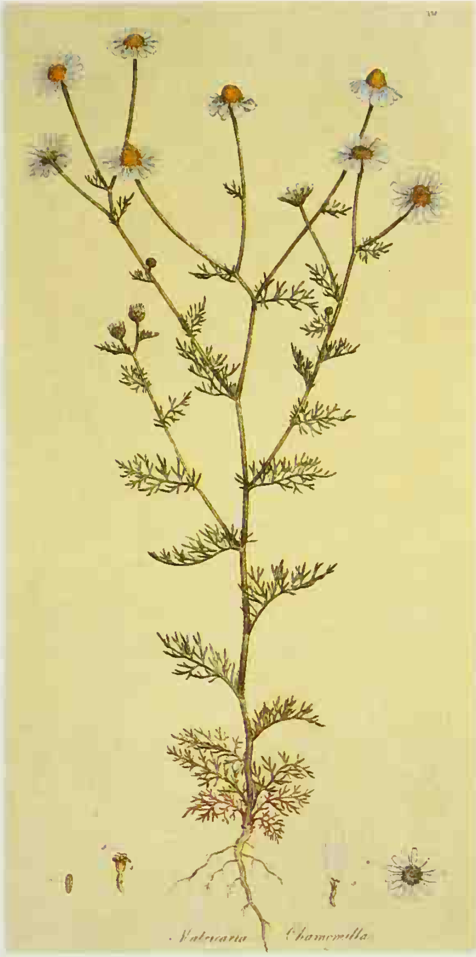
A similar principle is found in yoga (see YOGA) which, unlike most western methods of exercise, seeks to achieve a balance between the various energies flowing through the body rather than to overdevelop certain groups of muscles. For Ayurvedic practitioners the body and the mind are treated as one, so that, for example, excessive hate or jealousy are seen as indicators of disease requiring holistic treatment.

Many parallels are drawn by Ayurveda between the universe and man (see MACROCOSM AND MICROCOSM) which are seen as interrelated. The same principles of balance or imbalance hold for both nature (*prakriti*) and the self (*purusha*).

The Elements and Humours

In Hindu philosophy (as in others), the world is made up of the four elements of Fire (*agni*), Water (*jala* or *apas*), Air (*vayu*) and Earth (*prithivi*), to which is added Spirit (*akasha*). As all things in the universe are related, Ayurveda catalogues a detailed series of correspondences (see CORRESPONDENCES): for example Earth (*prithivi*) corresponds to the vowel 'a', the direction East, and the planet Jupiter.

These in turn, through food, water and breath, cultivate in the body the three 'humours', the *tridoshas*. The first is associated with the sun, which radiates heat and the energy for all biochemical reactions, and in man this is called *pitta* (bile), manifesting through the metabolism and the 'glow' of health and energy. The second is the moon: this governs the tides and water, biological rhythms and the fluid in the cells and circulating through the body, referred to as *kapha* (phlegm). The third dosha is the wind which moves in the atmosphere, and is in man the breath called *vata* (air), which governs the nervous system and the will to live. The relative balance of the three doshas on the physical plane reveals the health of the body.



Chamomile, an important herb in Ayurvedic medicine: from an old herbal

There is a clear parallel with the four elements of the ancient Greeks, and the four corresponding bodily 'humours' which conditioned western medical practice until the early eighteenth century.

The components of the human body are produced by successive transformations of food as it is digested: from food juice (*rasa*) through blood (*rakta*), flesh (*mainsa*), fat (*medas*), bone (*asthi*), marrow (*majja*), to semen (*sukra*).

Medical diagnosis is performed in a variety of ways, taking into account the patient's temperament, habits, colouring, bodily and breath smell, and (as in Chinese medicine) the pulse of the patient. The latter is read by placing the first three fingers over the pulse at the base of the thumb: each finger assesses a different pulse reading corresponding to a different element. It is asserted that there are 600 different pulse readings indicating a range of medical and psychological conditions.

Treatment consists of the prescription of remedies derived by simple processes from mineral, vegetable and animal substances. Although western medical practice often extracts and then synthesises drugs from natural products, it is only recently that researchers have come to appreciate that perhaps the whole herb contains other active trace chemicals which the extracted or synthesized drug does not contain.

Ayurvedic medicine still uses fresh or dried plants which have been collected at special times under conditions of ritual purity. Several thousand plants are listed by the modern Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia, of which 700 date back to the author Susruta. If the part of the plant to be used (such as leaves or seeds or flowers) is not specifically mentioned, then usually the root is prepared in an earthenware pot by grinding with honey, sesame oil or some similar medium. This contrasts with homoeopathy, which employs highly diluted plant tinctures, where little (if any) of the original substance remains in the medicine.

If the patient is, for example, suffering from chronic fatigue, and the Air pulse is weak, a herb or mineral may be prescribed whose function is to increase the circulation of Air. A typical tonic might contain equal parts of the seeds of the cowhage (Hindi name *kinvach*), the fruit of *Argyreia speciosa* (*samudrasosh*) and the root of sweet flag (*vacha*) compounded with sugar or boiled in milk and sugar.

The treatment philosophy of Ayurveda also proposes the need for changes in lifestyle, rather than simply attacking an inconvenient symptom: for example a change of diet may be a more desirable treatment for constipation than the prescription of laxatives, which often lead to a descending spiral of treatment, finally leading to colitis.

Interestingly, some of the most powerful of western medicines derive originally from herbal origins, such as digitoxin from the foxglove, opiates from the poppy, colchicine from the autumn crocus, atropine from the deadly nightshade, aconite from monkshood, and reserpine from the Indian snakebite root rauwolfia. Because of the complex chemistry of plants, there are undoubtedly many as yet undiscovered preparations, some of which are now being prescribed now as effective ayurvedic medicines.

FURTHER READING: *Caraka Samhita*, English text based on C. Datta's *Ayurveda Dipika* (Varanasi, 1976); Birgit Heyn, *Ayurvedic Medicine* (Thorsons) 1987; Bhagwan Dash, *Fundamentals of Ayurvedic Medicine* (New Delhi, 1978); Mohammed Abdurrazzak Hakim, *Principles and Practice of Traditional Systems of Medicine in India*, (WHO, Geneva, 1977).

The Eight Branches of Ayurveda

Kayachikitsa	Internal medicine, prescriptions
Salya tantra	Surgery
Salakya tantra	Treatment of the ears, nose, throat, eyes, antrum and facial structures
Agada tantra	The study of poisons and their effects on the body
Bhuta vidya	Treatment of mental disease by mantras (prayers), yantras (talimans) and semi-religious practices
Bala tantra	Gynaecology and paediatrics
Rasayana	The study of ageing processes
Vajikarana tantra	The study of sexual energies and their ability to promote health

AZANDE

THE AZANDE live in the very heart of Africa, where the borders of the Congo, Sudan and Central African Republics join. They number about 750,000, unevenly distributed over a territory of 75,000 square miles. The area has been disrupted for a century by the rapacity of the slave-traders, commercial exploitation, rough conquest, a major sleeping sickness epidemic, resettlement schemes and civil wars. Contact with economically more developed nations has done little to advance the people's welfare.

Before the days of colonial rule the Azande had expanded by conquering surrounding peoples whom they 'zandeized'. In the process a cluster of about 15 independent kingdoms was established. All the kings belonged to a dynasty which traced descent, in the male line, from an 18th century ruler named Ngura, whose numerous other noble descendants formed a ruling clan and aristocracy, the Avungara.

The Logic of Witchcraft

Evans-Pritchard's great study of Azande witchcraft, oracles and magic is more than a translation of Azande beliefs into terms which we can understand, and has much wider relevance. Probably, most people in the world today believe that one person can harm another by wishing him ill and using mystical and psychical means to do so. Evans-Pritchard showed that such beliefs, which account for phenomena which most readers will regard as imaginary, are not the product of specifically African or primitive ways of thinking. The beliefs and customs he describes are those of the Azande but his demonstration that there is a logic in witchcraft beliefs, and that they form part of a coherent system of thought and are insulated against contradictory evidence by supporting secondary beliefs, has a general application. So does his demonstration that variations in belief are related to differing structures of social relations. Subsequent studies have built on his work.

The Azande are no more illogical or prone to delusions than any other people. Given their degree of control over their environment and their degree of scientific knowledge of it, their beliefs are rational and their actions are based on common sense. They do not appeal to their beliefs about witchcraft to explain events which are clearly the consequences of idleness, incapacity or lack of self-control. A bad workman cannot blame bad craftsmanship on the work of witches; nor can an adulterer claim that he was bewitched into committing his fault. But the Azande do believe that most misfortunes, accidents, sicknesses and deaths are caused by the malicious activity of witches or sorcerers.

Inside the Witch

Witches possess an inherited characteristic, identifiable as a substance in the intestines, the 'soul' of which, if heated by the malevolence of its owner, can mystically 'strike' a victim and 'eat' his strength. The 'substance', like baldness, may or may not be transmitted to children. If it is, it remains latent unless activated by ill-will, and its manifestation, it is believed, may be conscious or unconscious. It increases in strength as its possessor matures, so that the anger of elders is to be feared much more than that of the young.

Andre Held

The Azande believe that witchcraft is a substance in the stomach, a part of the body which is emphasized in this statuette. Exaggerated ear ornaments are also a distinctive feature

Ethics of Witchcraft

If a man is upright – of sound principle, charitable, even tempered, tolerant, generous – he will not set witchcraft to work even if he has it in his stomach. The Azande say it remains 'cool'. But if a man is quarrelsome, spiteful, bad-tempered, greedy, overambitious, his witchcraft will get 'hot' and go out at night to harm those against whom he bears grudges. Thus the theory of witchcraft...embraces a theory of morals, for it says that witches are wicked people. Azande say: 'Jealousy comes first and witchcraft follows after.' The ethics of witchcraft thus disapprove of the common anti-social vices and approve of the virtues of many societies.

Max Gluckman
Custom and Conflict in Africa

Sorcerers use bad medicines, act consciously and may work for profit. Both witches and sorcerers are evil though superficially ordinary persons who are able to conceal their perverted and unnatural characteristics.

Occurrences which in other cultures are attributed to luck, chance, coincidence, fate, or the will of God, the Azande blame on witchcraft. It is normal for a hurrying man not to notice a snake slumbering in his path, for a startled snake to strike and for a bitten man to die. What is unique is the coincidence of the events happening at a certain time in a certain place, and it is this which is put down to witchcraft.

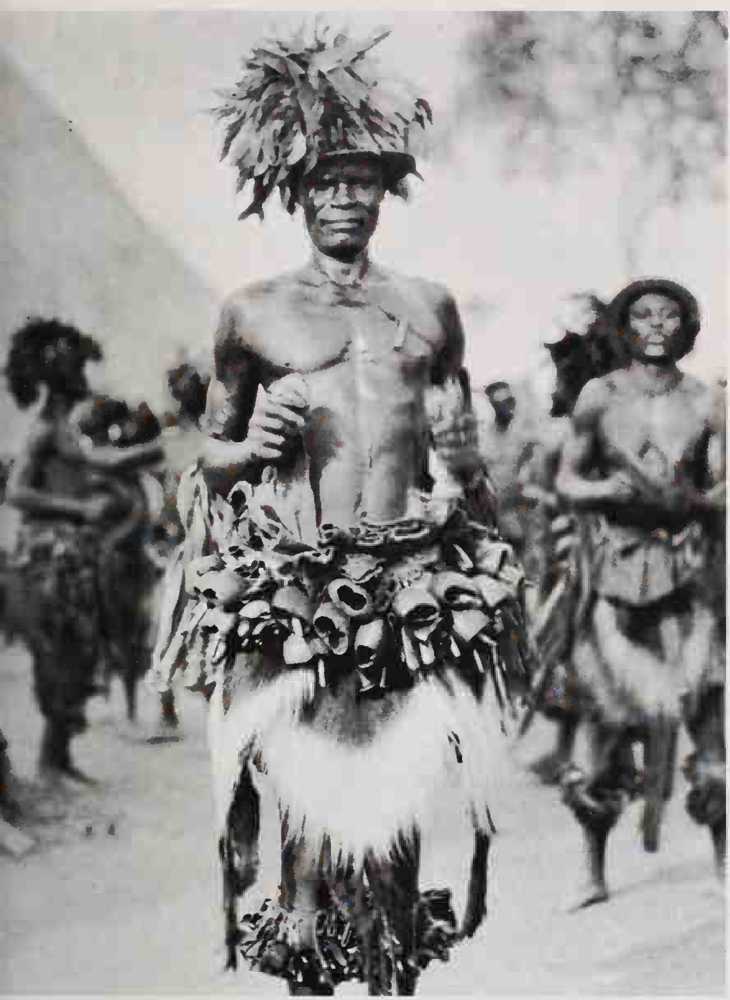
Protection against Witches

A wise man by taking heed can avoid some of the machinations of witches, though not all, as some witches are wildly malevolent and cunning beyond foreseeing. Cultivating gentle and generous behaviour, and fulfilling social and moral obligations avoids rousing the rivalry and malice of neighbours. Also, a man can forewarn himself by the use of divination and prepare himself by the use of protective magic and medicines. Before any activity which involves unpredictable risk, such as hunting, marrying or travelling, a Zande likes to consult the oracles. If their decision is inauspicious, then he cancels or postpones his plans and congratulates himself on the foresight which enabled him to avoid the hidden mischance. If, despite a favourable forecast, misfortune nevertheless ensues, the explanation of the oracles' failure is found in secondary parts of the belief system; and the victim argues that he committed an error in divination, or that the evil was activated after the consultation, or even that his oracle itself had been a victim of sorcery.

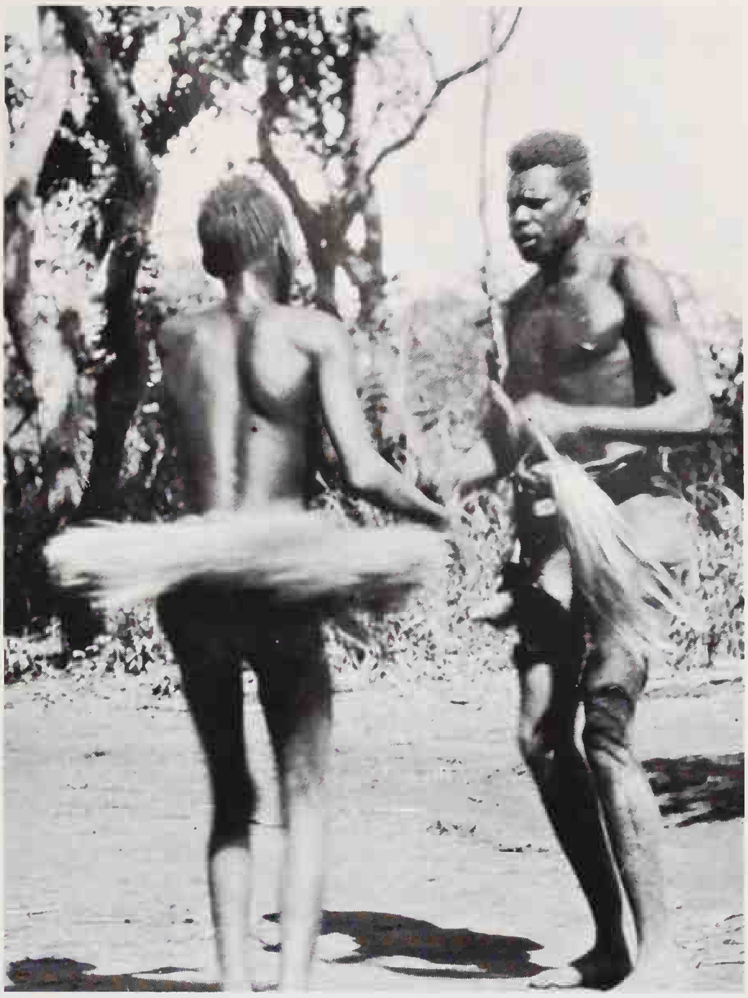
The Oracles

Important oracles, in ascending order of reliability, are the termites, the rubbing board and the *benge*, or poison oracle. Oracles cannot volunteer information but can only indicate agreement, disagreement or uncertainty in response to direct questions put to them in customary forms. For example, a man who wished to inquire if his wife was an adulteress and then to discover the name of her lover, might first consult the termites oracle. He would stick two leafy branches (of particular species) into a termites' mound and leave them overnight, after instructing the blind termites to indicate his wife's guilt or innocence by either eating or rejecting the branches.

If the oracle found her guilty, then he might next place the names of her suspected lovers before his rubbing board oracle. Juice is squeezed on the 'female' table part and the 'male' lid is jerked across it. Smooth sliding or firm sticking are the two opposite responses. Sticking at a name indicates the adulterer. If the husband then wishes to take legal action, he must consult the poison oracle, for the rubbing board oracle, being under the manual control of the operator,



E. E. Evans-Pritchard



E. E. Evans-Pritchard

Left **An Azande witch-doctor in ceremonial dress: bells made from the fruits of a palm tree hang from his waist, bundles of seeds are tied round his legs and ankles, and in each hand he holds an iron rattle** ***Above*** **Circumcision was adopted by the Azande only towards the end of the 19th century: an initiate dances under the guidance of a tribal elder**

could be falsified, whereas the poison oracle is not and therefore can stand as evidence. Wealthy and elderly men with many wives, who were most likely to be the victims of adultery, were those who had most access to oracle poison and the fowls which were its vehicles.

The action of witchcraft and oracles is most clearly seen in the contexts of sickness and death; for the Azande do not observe witchcraft but rather sickness, from which they presume witchcraft. Take the case of a victim who is struck at through the illness of a dependant who is being 'eaten' by a witch. Physical symptoms are treated medically and, as witchcraft has a short range (it acts only among those who interact socially with each other), the patient might be removed to a distance. But these are only palliative measures and, for a complete cure, the attacking source must be sought out and restrained.

Women and minors are seldom accused by men because their strength is seen as weaker and because there can be few occasions on which they are in social competition. Accuser and accused are usually of similar status.

The consultor places the names of suspects before the poison oracle. Benge is a type of strychnine, arduous to acquire and irksome to use; restrictions which limit casual accusations and concentrate it in the hands of senior men. A little benge is forced down the neck of a fowl in a prescribed manner. The fowl is then addressed and questioned. For example: 'If X is the witch, oracle kill the fowl'. If a clear affirmative is given, the consultor cuts off a wing of the chicken and sends it, via a chief's deputy, to the accused. The accused should then 'cool' his witchcraft by blowing a mouthful of water over the wing. If the patient recovers, that is an end to the incident; if not further consultation is required. Should the patient die, then a murder has been committed and the victim's kin must seek either justice or vengeance. Traditionally, after further consultation, the accuser took the evidence of his own oracle to court. There the ruler's oracle corroborated or rejected the plea. Compensation for adultery and murder, or legal vengeance, could only be executed by authority of the court.

Witch Cats

The most feared of all these evil creatures that are classed by analogy with witchcraft is a species of wild cat called Adandara. They live in the bush and are said to have bright bodies and gleaming eyes and to utter shrill cries at night. Azande say of these cats 'It is witchcraft, they are the same as witchcraft'. The male cats have sexual relations with women who give birth to kittens and suckle them like human infants. Every one agrees that the cats exist and that it is fatal to see them. It is unlucky even to hear their cries. I heard a cat cry one night and shortly afterwards one of my servants came to my hut to borrow a magic whistle which I had bought and which was made especially for warding off the influence of these cats. He uttered a spell and blew on the whistle and went back to his hut seemingly satisfied that he had warded off danger from our home.

E. E. Evans-Pritchard
Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande

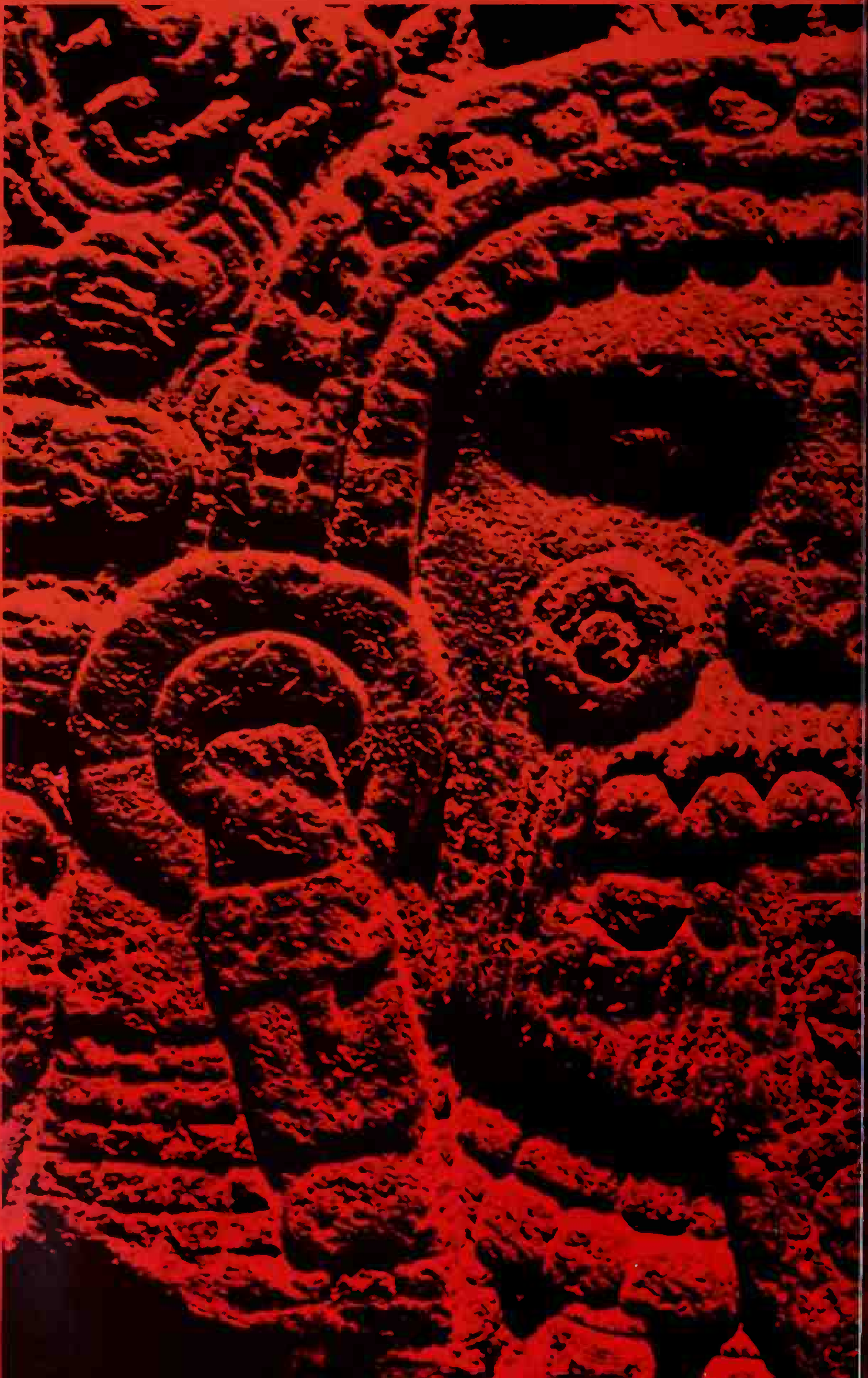
The Azande are not witch-ridden. They do not go about in perpetual fear of witches. Just as we normally observe the rules of hygiene and road safety but only fear sickness or road accidents when they seem imminent or actually occur, the Azande normally take reasonable,precautions against witches and only fear them when they suffer, or have reason to anticipate, a misfortune. P.T.W.BAXTER

FURTHER READING: The great work on the subject is E. E. Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford University Press, 1937). See also the same author's *The Zande Trickster* (Oxford, 1967); *Azande: History and Political Institutions* (Oxford, 1971), Conrad C. Reining, *The Zande Scheme* (Northwestern University Press, 1966), and Douglas H. Johnson, *Nuer Prophets: a History of Prophecy from the Upper Nile* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

AZTECS

The Blood Feast of the Sun

The gods of the Aztecs 'are expressions of images which lie deep in the structure of the human personality'; they are images of beauty and of blood



THE AZTECS were a group of American Indians speaking Nahuatl, a language of the Siouan family. They came originally from North America but may have been in Mexico for several centuries before they became a powerful tribe. The language was also spoken by the Toltecs, who controlled most of Mexico between 750 and 1000 AD.

Southern Mexico had been a civilized country long before the Aztecs built their great city state. As early as 900 BC there had been a civilization of importance on the southern curve of the Gulf of Mexico. This was a development which appeared quite suddenly among tribes of primitive farmers whose villages depended on maize cultivation. When this early Olmec civilization declined, it was succeeded in southwestern Mexico by another culture, developed by the Zapotecs, who continued from the 2nd century BC until 1480 AD, when they were brought into the Aztec Empire.

On the highland plateau of Central Mexico a new civilization arose around the city of Teotihuacan (Teo-tee-wa-kan) the Place where the Gods were Made. Here great pyramid temples were built for the Sun and Moon and the Wind-and-Rain. The city was probably the home of nearly a million people. The paintings and sculpture from Teotihuacan show that much of later Aztec religion was already in existence by the first century AD. Teotihuacan had a great many contacts with surrounding Mexican tribes, and its art style is found throughout the whole area of the later Aztec Empire.

After the fall of Teotihuacan in the 6th century AD, there was a period of confusion, which ended with the development of a warlike empire based at Tula (or Tollan) the Place of Reeds, 20 miles north of what is now Mexico City. The Toltecs, who ruled from Tula, gradually controlled all civilized parts of Mexico. But soon after 970 a civil war broke out. The fighting was excessively fierce and a terrible pestilence broke out. By the end of the war the Toltec Empire was finished. Some leading Toltecs had escaped to Yucatan, far to the south, and tradition says that only 20 noble Toltec families survived on the Mexican plateau.

These Toltecs were important because

they were descended from the god Quetzalcoatl (Kwet-zal-co-atl) the Precious Twin, who was the planet Venus as Morning Star. But the name can also be read as Feathered Serpent, which refers to Quetzalcoatl as the wind god whose breath rippled the leaves and grasses as if they were the green plumes of the earth serpent. Quetzalcoatl was blessed by the Creator, and his descendants alone among the Mexican nobility had the right to rule the country.

Quest for Cactus Rock

After 1000 AD the Mexican city states were constantly at war with one another. Some tribes reached a high level of civilization but others were poverty-stricken and still wore skins and hunted with bows and arrows.

Among the latter were the ancestors of the Aztecs. It was in 1168 that the leaders of this small tribe came to a ruined temple where they heard a message from a talking image of their tribal god Huitzilopochtli (Wit-zil-o-poch-tli), Blue Humming Bird on the Left, the bright sun god at the height of his path in the sky. They were sent on a pilgrimage which lasted nearly a century. They were promised that one day they would find an island in a lake with a rock on which there would be a cactus. On the cactus they would see their god in the form of a shining eagle holding a serpent in his talons. This would be the place where they were to settle and build a city from which they would rule all Mexico.

After many tribulations the Mexica, as they called themselves, were defeated and ensnared by the king of Colhuacan. The tough Aztec tribesmen were soon sent to help in a war against the surrounding tribes. They killed all the enemies they saw because they would not bring back prisoners to be sacrificed to the gods of their oppressive ruler in Colhuacan. Instead they cut off one ear from each victim, and put them in packs on their backs. When the king upbraided them as cowards who could not capture any prisoners for his gods, they silently poured a torrent of human ears over his feet.

Henri Stierlin

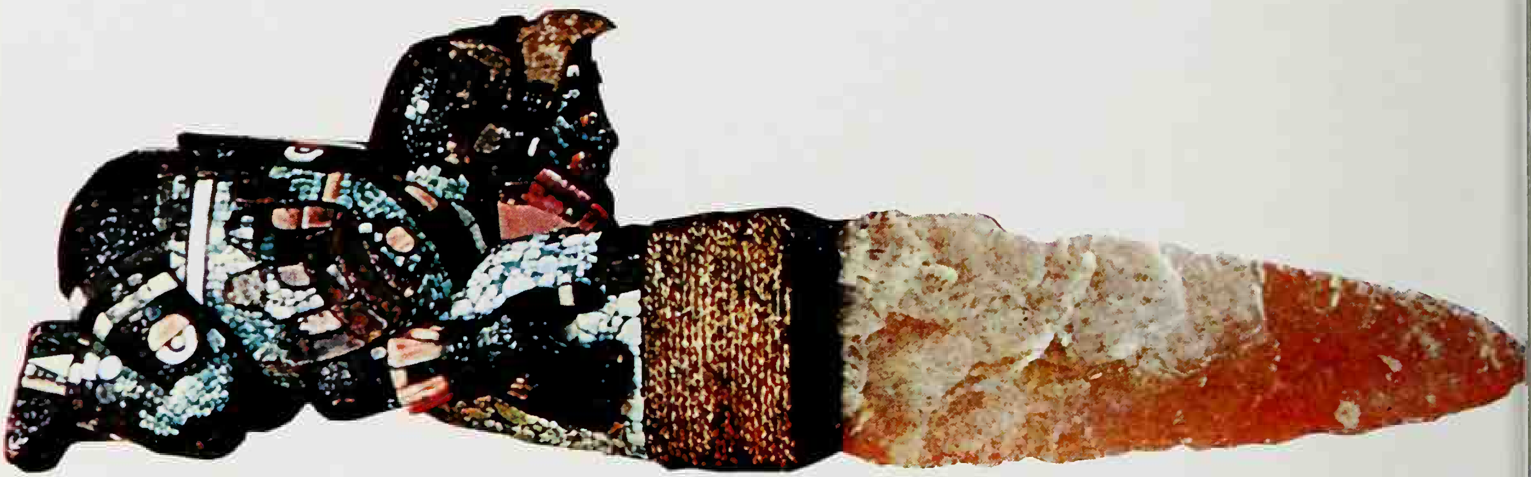
Tonatiuh, the sun god: originally his heaven was reserved for those who had achieved fulfilment on earth, but the Aztecs made it the abode of warriors: Aztec relief, c1500 AD

Human Sacrifice

It is difficult for us to come to a true understanding of what human sacrifice meant to the 16th century Aztec: but it may be observed that every culture possesses its own idea of what is and what is not cruel. At the height of their career the Romans shed more blood in their circuses and for amusement than even the Aztecs did before their idols. The Spaniards, so sincerely moved by the cruelty of the native priests, nevertheless massacred, burnt, mutilated and tortured with a perfectly clear conscience. We, who shudder at the tale of the bloody rites of Ancient Mexico, have seen with our own eyes and in our days civilized nations proceed systematically to the extermination of millions of human beings and to the perfection of weapons capable of annihilating in one second a hundred times more victims than the Aztecs ever sacrificed.

Human sacrifice among the Mexicans was inspired neither by cruelty nor by hatred. It was their response, and the only response that they could conceive, to the instability of a continually threatened world. Blood was necessary to save this world and the men in it: the victim was no longer an enemy who was to be killed but a messenger, arraigned in a dignity that was almost divine. All the relevant descriptions . . . convey the impression not of a dislike between the sacrificer and the victim nor of anything resembling a lust for blood but of a strange fellow feeling . . .

Jacques Soustelle
Daily Life of the Aztecs



The king was shocked and afraid. He dismissed the Aztecs and told them they could settle freely on an islet in the Lake of Mexico. So they went to the rocky islet among the swamps. There their leader found a stream beside a rock, and on the rock was the cactus and the shining eagle of Huitzilopochtli. Their long pilgrimage was over. The year was 1325.

Horror and Cruelty

It was not until 1375 that an Aztec war chief assumed the title of Tlatoani and so asserted his independence as the 'Speaker' of the will of the Aztec people. In 1440 the fifth chief of the Aztecs came to rule Tenochtitlan (Cactus Rock) as they called Mexico City. The Mexica now dominated the whole of the Valley of Mexico, and had allied themselves with the neighbouring cities of Tezcuco and Tlacopan. Their chiefs had sought out princesses of pure Toltec descent as their brides, so that they could inherit the divine right to rule which belonged to the descendants of Quetzalcoatl. The new ruler of the Aztecs was given the title of Uetlatoani or Great Speaker for the several tribes over whom he had dominion. His name was Moctecuzoma Ilhuicamina (Moc-te-cu-zoma Il-wi-ca-mina), meaning Noble Strong Arm, He Who Aims at the Sky. During his reign the Aztec armies continued their conquests and first reached the shores of the Mexican Gulf.

In 1484 the Great Speaker Tizoc (He who offers his own Blood to the Gods) laid the foundations for the rebuilding of the ancient temple to Huitzilopochtli. He took prisoners and sacrificed some to the god. The annals say that this was the first sacrifice of human captives on a large scale. In fact it had long been felt to be necessary to kill a few captives, rarely more than 20 at even the greatest ceremonies.

Tizoc died before the temple was completed. The great building was to be finished and dedicated under his successor, the Great Speaker Ahuitzotl (Ah-wit-zotl) or Water-Opossum, a magical creature believed to be the cause of death by drowning.

Ahuitzotl was a patron of the arts, and a great lover of music. He had more wives than any other Mexican ruler, and rejoiced in flowers, beautiful birds and animals. Yet his name became a synonym of horror and cruelty. When the great temple was dedicated he took 20,000 captives and had them all sacrificed in four days by eight teams of priests. The year was 1487, only five years before Columbus sailed into the West Indies. Ahuitzotl died in 1502 when the Spanish had just settled in Cuba. His successor was Prince Strong Arm, the Noble Lord; Moctecuzoma Xocoyotzin.

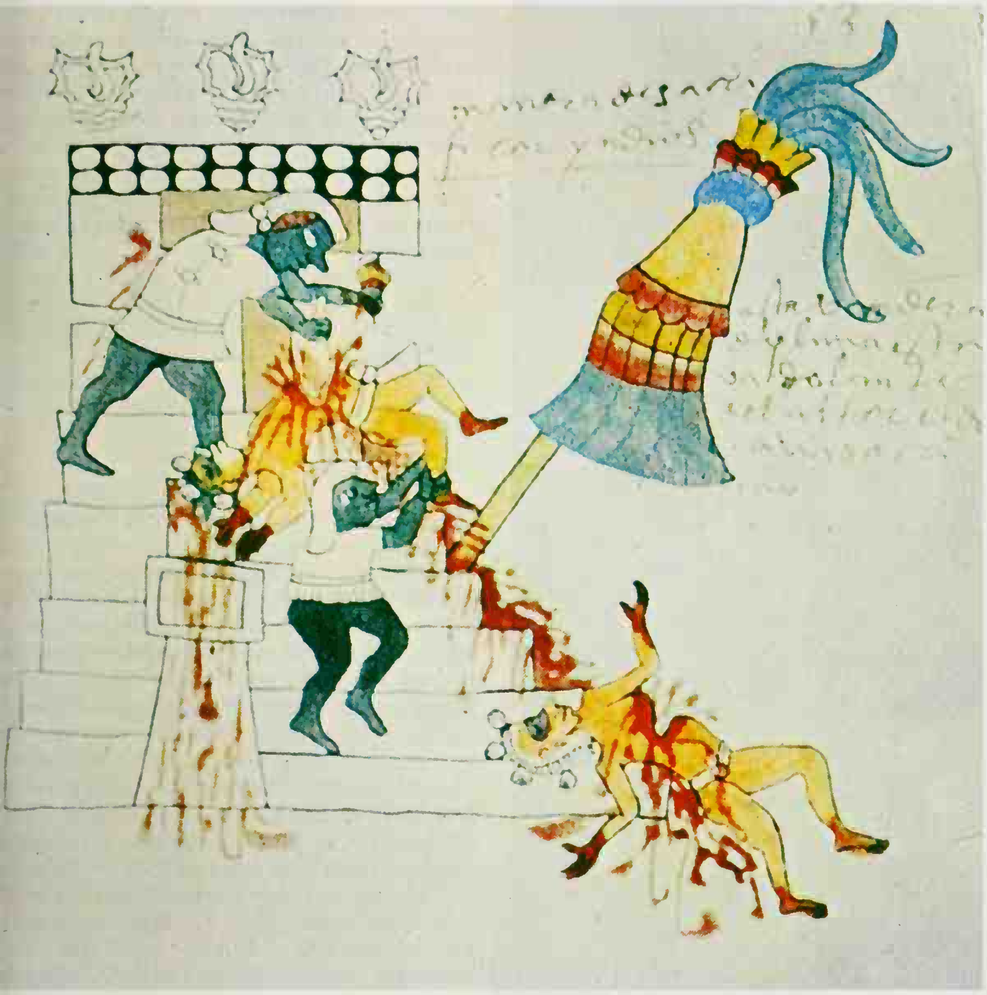
By this time almost all of civilized Mexico was under Aztec domination. Traders went far afield, bringing turquoise from New Mexico, gold from Panama and precious feathers from Guatemala. Even the independent priest-kings of the Zapotecs had surrendered. But when Moctecuzoma (Montezuma) died in 1519, his city was occupied by the Spanish troops of Hernando Cortes. The god had fulfilled his promise of glory and had now deserted the Aztecs; and it was left only for the brave young Prince Falling Eagle (Cuauhtemoc) to lead a hopeless resistance against the white men.

The Two-Lord and the Fire

During their years of expansion the Aztecs had been, in their way, an enlightened people. They not only married princesses of Toltec descent but also sought out knowledge of past arts and crafts. They hired teachers from the Mixtecs, who knew a great deal about Toltec customs and included many fine artist-craftsmen among the tribe. The work of Aztec artists was almost entirely concerned with religion and it is possible to understand the inner meaning of many of their best works because captive Aztec nobles gave much information to Spanish missionaries after the Conquest.

The religion which they described was already an ancient one when the Aztecs first settled on Cactus Rock. It was an expression of the inner spirit of Mexico, the result of generations of philosophical thought by American Indians who had built up a new kind of life from the discovery of agriculture right up to the evolution of great cities.

Basically they believed that beyond the world and the gods of nature there must be a Supreme Creator, whom they named Ometecuhtli (Omey-te-cu-tli) which means Two-Lord. As Creator he was thought to be two persons in one, for no creation could take place without the co-operation of male and female. Sometimes he is shown as a pair of



C. Burland

British Museum

Far left Mixtec sacrificial knife made from chalcedony, 14th century AD *Left* The sun had to be nourished with offerings of the 'red cactus fruit', human hearts and blood, according to Aztec belief. If this sacrifice was neglected the sun would stop moving and the human race would die from the resulting fire: to be sacrificed to the sun was considered a glorious death. Illustration from a manuscript in the Museo de America, Madrid *Below* Aztec skull, encrusted with turquoise mosaic: possibly a representation of the black Tezcatlipoca, god of 'all forms of black magic and devilry'

ery old people, and sometimes as a single eing dressed half as a woman and half as man.

It seems that Ometecuhtli was the product f thought by learned philosophers. Most f the Mexicans looked to the central fire-lace in their homes as the shrine of the ldest of the gods. They called him Ueuetotl (Old Old God) and saw in him a symbol f the continuous creation of fire (equivalent o life) and the destruction of used-up things. Ie was a fountain of change at the heart of verything. His place in the heavens was the ole Star, the pivot of the universe. The ldest image of this god, shown as an aged nan seated with a fire-bowl balanced on his ead, comes from the ruined pyramid of uicuilco, near Mexico City. It dates from nore than 2000 years before the Spanish onquest of Mexico.

The Mexicans believed that 13 domed eavens circulated around the pivot of the niverse. There was one for each of the visible lanets, the sun, the moon, the clouds, the ightnings, the heat, and the rain; all conained within the dome of the fixed stars. Jnder the flat surface of the earth there vere thought to be nine underworlds, the owest of which were the lands of the dead.

As the central hearth-fire in the house was he pivot of earthly life, so the souls of the lead who eventually entered the fire in the owest region of the universe ascended to a oint where the Creator might send them ack to earth. But this again was a philoophic idea. Most people appear to have xpected a long stay in the underworld, which was after all a very happy place where people in the form of skeletons enjoyed a normal social life, presided over by the Lord and Lady of the Dead.

To the philosopher this multi-layered universe was like a single drop of water in the hand of the ineffable Creator, Ometecuhtli. But in general the Aztecs believed, much as did their Red Indian forbears, that the world was the back of a gigantic living creature.

The Black Mirror

The Aztec legends described Mother Earth as a strange monstrous being like a gigantic alligator. Long ago, the black Tezcatlipoca (Tez-caat-li-po-ca) or Smoking Mirror, so named from his symbol, a black obsidian mirror which appeared to smoke when the magicians looked into it to descry the future, had drawn the earth up from the great waters of creation. As he put his foot into the waters, the monstrous alligator snapped at it but the foot was not torn off until the terrible god of magic and youthful energy had drawn the earth monster from the waters and made her back into the dry land. Since then the god has had but a single foot and his lonely footprint in the heavens is the constellation of the great Bear. According to another story, his foot was cut off when the doors of the underworld closed on his leg.

Tezcatlipoca was lord of the four directions on earth, East, South, West and North. He was also lord of the Nature gods when these other gods were developed.

A popular legend told of a cave in the universe where the Mother of the Gods gave birth to starry offspring. They were the 400 northerners, the 400 southerners, and the planets. Then she became pregnant again. The children were upset and planned to destroy the new child. Only the golden moon girl wanted to protect her mother.

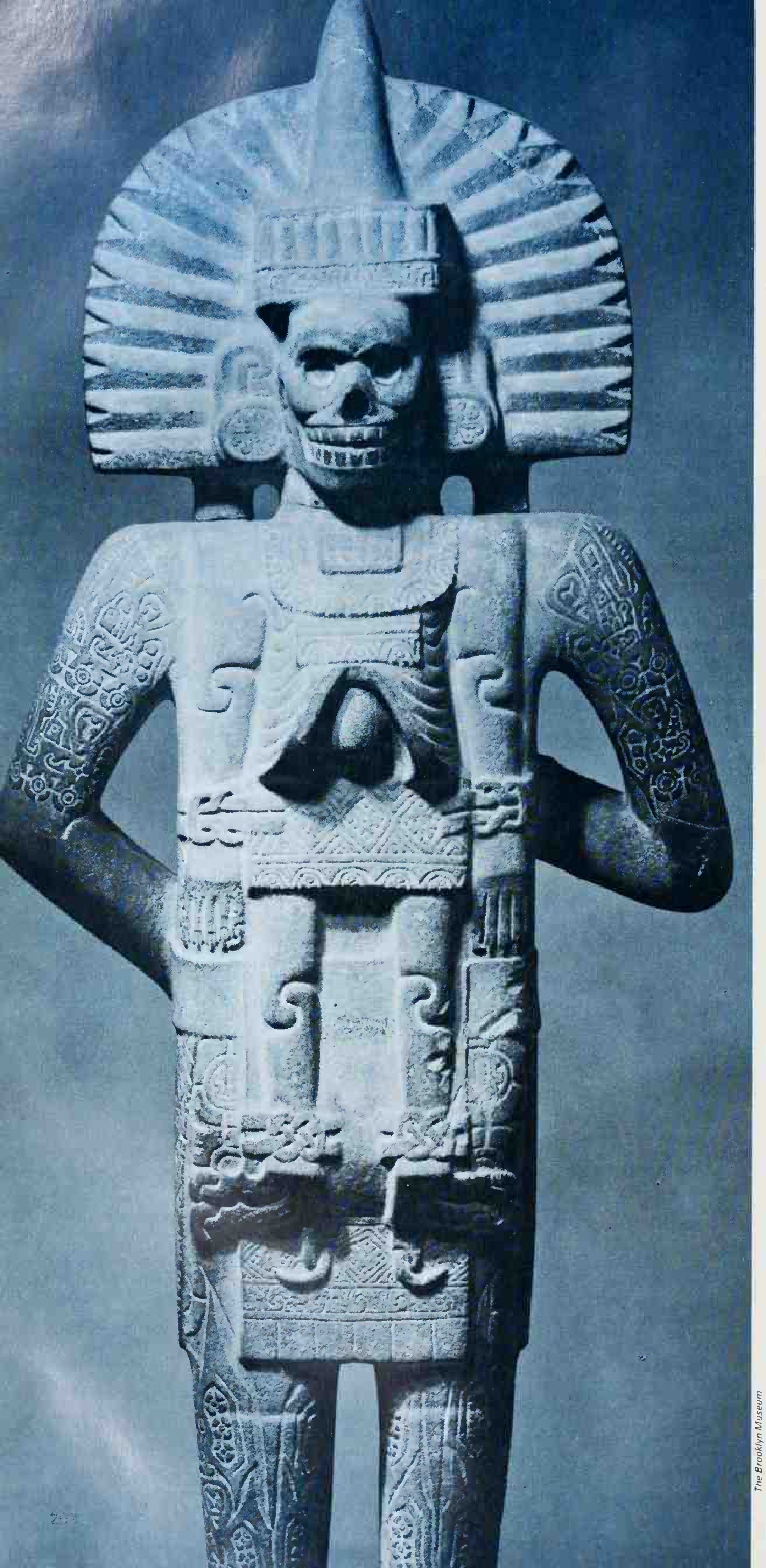
When the new child was born, it proved to be a monstrous sun-before-the-earthly-sun. It was Tezcatlipoca armed as a warrior. He destroyed all the stars. Then, seeing his sister among the slain, he realized that her head might yet live, so he cut it off and cast her into the sky, where the head with golden bells on her cheeks can still be seen as the Moon. Each day when the sun emerges in our real world, we see that the stars of night are slain, but they are reborn as the moon comes among them, grows pregnant and then meets her ever-recurring end.

The Fourth Sun

Once the earth was established, the gods created men. Three times the human race became too self-opinionated and had to be destroyed, at about 2000-year intervals. They were destroyed by the fire, the waters, the winds. Now the present human race, who were made by the gods from the beloved maize plant which is still the sustenance of mankind, are being tested.

The end of this universe will come from a terrible earthquake. Whether after this fourth sun, the earth will be re-populated by another better race remains to be experienced in the future.

On each re-creation a new sun was made



The Brooklyn Museum

Left **The god Quetzalcoatl was the Lord of Life and Death, and god of the wind: only his descendants, the Toltecs, had the right to rule over the Aztecs** ***Facing page*** **Three times the human race destroyed itself through pride, according to Aztec tradition, and a new sun was made by the gods for each re-creation. A representation of the sun is at the centre of this calendar stone, c1500 AD. Almost 12 feet wide, it was found in Mexico City**

by the gods. At the beginning of the present creation they made a great offering place at Teotihuacan. There they met for four days, waiting for one of them to cast himself into the fire. At last from a distance there came a miserably ill and poverty-stricken god. He had no reason to continue as he was, so he voluntarily cast himself into the fire. Blazing, and blue with magic power, he flew into the heavens as Tonatiuh (Ton-a-tiyu) the Lord of Fate, the sun. The sun appeared every day, and each day had its separate fate for people, so the count of time which the fortune tellers used was based simply on the sun.

The sun was very brave, the source of all brightness and glory. He had his special heaven for brave warriors who had been sacrificed and for women who had died in childbirth. These warriors, dressed as eagles, lifted the sun to the top of the sky every morning; the women lowered him down each evening into the underworld.

The Nourishment of Blood

All the time the sun was thirsting from the great heat. So he had to be nourished and cooled by offerings of the red cactus-fruit (which meant human hearts and blood). Only a few need be sacrificed to keep the sun moving in the sky, but the sacrifice must never be neglected or the human race would die from the fire caused by a motionless sun.

Of all deaths the most glorious was to be sacrificed to the sun. The sun himself sacrificed his victims in the sky as he rose and the stars died. On earth the stars were represented by the spotted quails, which were killed every morning at sunrise. Sometimes people saw at this lucky time the little brother of the sun, Piltzintecuhtli (the Divine Princeling), the planet Mercury.

Sometimes the Great Star was visible, in the form of the morning star lifting up the sun. This was a symbol of Quetzalcoatl, the god of the air and of human civilization. Sometimes in the evening they saw the Great Star as the evening star, pushing the sun down into the red sunset. This was the symbol of the evil twin, Xolotl, who was an animal creature, leading people into sin and working black witchcraft against humanity and against the other gods.

The other planets were also gods; and so were the major stars. The groups of stars through which the sun passed were the houses of 13 gods. These were very like our

Beheading the Maize-Woman

The maize rites of the Aztecs:
As soon as the plant began to germinate, they went to the fields 'to find the god of the maize' – a shoot which they brought back to the house and offered food, exactly as they would to a god. In the evening, it was brought to the temple of Chicomecoatl, goddess of sustenance, where a group of young girls were gathered . . . The girls were of three different ages, very young, adolescent, and grown up – symbolizing, no doubt, the stages in the life of the maize . . . three months later, when the crop was ripe, a girl representing the goddess of the new maize, Xilonen, was beheaded; this sacrifice opened the door to using the new maize profanely, for food, which seems to suggest that it was in the nature of an offering of the first-fruits. Sixty days later, at the conclusion of the harvest, there was another sacrifice. A woman representing the goddess Toci, 'our Mother' (the goddess of the maize gathered for using) was beheaded and immediately afterwards skinned. One priest arrayed himself in the skin, while a piece taken from the thigh was carried to the Temple of Cinteotl, god of the maize, where another participant made himself a mask out of it. For several weeks, this person was looked upon as a woman in childbirth – for what this rite probably meant was that Toci, once dead, was reborn in her son, the dried maize, the grain that would provide the winter's food.

Mircea Eliade
Patterns in Comparative Religion

12 signs of the zodiac, though the Mexicans knew that there were 13 moons in any one year, but that one of them was always incomplete. Thus there was always a relationship between earthly events and the shapes in the sky where the gods had their palaces.

Earth was the domain of the powerful and demonic Tezcatlipoca, who had four forms. He was the yellow Tezcatlipoca as god of the sunrise in the East, of bravery and growing crops. The blue Tezcatlipoca was the fertility spirit and the patron spirit of the Aztec nation. In the West he became the red Tezcatlipoca, who died by being skinned alive so that maize could be given to mankind. In this form he was Xipe Totec, Our Lord the Flayed One. In the North he was he black Tezcatlipoca in the land where the sun never shone, where he became the ruler of all forms of black magic and devilry.

The Maize God

This religion suited warriors and the astronomer-priests but it had little meaning for the farmers who produced the food on which the people lived. Most Mexicans were small farmers, feeding their own families and growing cotton for their own clothing. They needed to propitiate the rain and wind, the spirits of vegetation and the kindly Earth Mother. Probably their religion was more ancient than that of the warriors to which t became wedded in the complex Aztec theological system. Their traditions were fully integrated into the other system, however, and certainly by Aztec times the whole complex of beliefs presented a kind of unity. It was no more logical than an exciting dream; and that may well be because the gods of Mexico were really those factors within the depths of the human personality from which our dreams normally spring. Always, without any very conscious thinking about it the Aztecs linked the world of nature with the sequence of human life, and projected their thoughts onto a very human pantheon of deities, regarded with all the affection and fear with which humans regard their neighbours, particularly of the non-human kind.

The almost passive centre of the farmers' religion was the maize plant. It had many spirits, but was basically the maize god Cinteotl (Sin-tay-otl). This divine power within the basic foodstuff of ancient America was nurtured by Mother Earth. He loved pretty Chalchihuitlicue, the flirtatious mistress of the rain god Tlaloc, and was cleansed by the winds sent by Quetzalcoatl.

C Reyes-Valerio

When the first green ears appeared on the maize, the girls took some and danced with their hair thrown loose and with naked breasts, for the maize was now the pretty young goddess Xilonen. Later, when the maize was to be harvested, bundles of ears were made up to represent the maize spirit, and were carried ceremonially to be enshrined in the granaries for next year's sowing. Then some of the grain was chewed by the girls so that it would ferment in water and so become a delightful kind of light beer. Great magic was worked by the priests so that each year the maize could be protected from its natural foes. Maize was life, and the rhythm of planting and reaping conditioned the whole concept of the meaning of the passage of time in Mexico. At the harvest festival the girls wore necklaces and headbands of brightly dyed popcorn, as if it were the most delightful of flowers, and indeed so it was.

The Magical Year

The Aztec year was not divided into weeks and months but into periods of 20 days each. Eighteen of these periods made up the calendar year, which included five 'nothing' days to bring the count correctly up to 365 days. There was an extraordinary system of working out a magical year, which consisted of periods of 260 (20 x 13) days, within which all the normal variations of fate took place. When the magical and civil

The priestly way was a strangely savage life of deep learning; a kind of ferocious holiness

The Essence of Fear

Coatlicue (Co-at-lee-kway), the 'Lady of the Serpent Skirt', and mother of Huitzilopochtli, was thought of as powerful and awesome, so the task of the sculptors was to transmute those qualities into stone. The great statue in Mexico, whose head is twin serpents, whose necklace human hands and hearts, whose feet and hands are viciously armed with claws and whose skirt is a mat of writhing snakes, brings into a dynamic concentrate the manifold horrors of the universe. A smaller carving, simpler and less detailed, produces this same effect, implying that the very essence of fear was honoured and worshipped.

G. C. Vaillant
The Aztecs of Mexico

calendars came into line, which occurred every 52 years, there was a great festival at which new fire was ceremonially made and distributed, and every temple was renovated as if creation had begun again.

The Aztec day began at sunset. There was no calculation of hours, because in all normal life it was quite sufficient to observe sunset and sunrise. There was a period when the sun was at its highest point in the day, and at night there was a mid-point of night. This was probably determined by noting the stars which appeared in the zenith when the sun set, and waiting till they were setting on the western horizon. This procedure would be sufficiently accurate for the emperor and the priests to make the midnight observation of the starry sky.

There were nine gods who were known as the Lords of the Night. Each in turn held sway over the hours of darkness for a night. There were 13 Lords of the Day, and each of them held sway in turn over a day. Thus, in the magical calendar of 260 days, which consisted of the combinations of 13 numerals with the 20 days of each period, there was this other rhythm of ruling deities of each period. Each 13-day period had a protecting pair of deities, and similarly the 20-day periods had each a guardian spirit. Within this fantastic almanac there were 13 magical birds flying with their individual influences on fate, but fortunately for the sanity of the fortune tellers the birds ran exactly parallel to the numeral series.

A Ferocious Holiness

The priests in Aztec Mexico were the most important example of social mobility. Warriors sometimes, by feats of great bravery, might move across barriers and become members of the tribal nobility; but priests might come from any social class. Young candidates were sent by their parents to a training school. They were questioned very carefully by the priests, because such a life meant much hardship and demanded a great love of learning. The tests were the same for children of the meanest serf and for those of the greatest noble.

Once boys entered the temple service they went through much hardship, sleeping on the ground and being woken up for night ceremonies. They became inured to spending long hours in chanting poetic history and theology, and learning the knowledge of the stars and of medicine. They must frequently perform acts of personal offering by cutting their ears and tongues to give blood to the gods.

The black-painted junior priest ate little and simply and never cut or cleaned his hair or nails, but acquired knowledge and wisdom as he progressed. He might become an interpreter of magical symbols or an artist or, if he were good enough, he might become a sacrificing priest who graduated from taking out the hearts of quails to performing a similar operation on the hearts of living men.

The priestly way was a strangely savage life of deep learning; a kind of ferocious holiness. At the head of the priestly organization were the High Priest of the Rains and the High Priest of the Winds. Their titles show that whatever deities they were actually serving, their office was to preserve the life and fertility of the land.

Omens and the Four Rains

There were also religious women, who were usually employed in making vestments of beautiful weaving and featherwork for the servants of the gods. They were expected to carry out the cleaning of the temples and also to cleanse humans from disease, just as the goddess Tlazolteotl could do with her magic. They had a considerable knowledge of herbal medicine, which was aided by the national passion for taking a sauna bath as a form of spiritual purification. It is clear from the painted books that some of the priestesses were elevated to the rank of Sacrificers, who took human hearts for the gods.

Another group of religious servants were those whom the gods seized upon and caused to utter prophecy. These were people who saw visions, or heard the voices of the spirits of the dead or the voices of the gods. Many of them would have been trance mediums of great power in our day. But any person who showed an abnormal mental condition was thought to have received a divine inspiration. A passage in a manuscript called the Codex Laud, at Oxford, compares the highly trained astronomer-priest to the inspired prophet. One has command of the moving stars but the other has command of the breath of life.

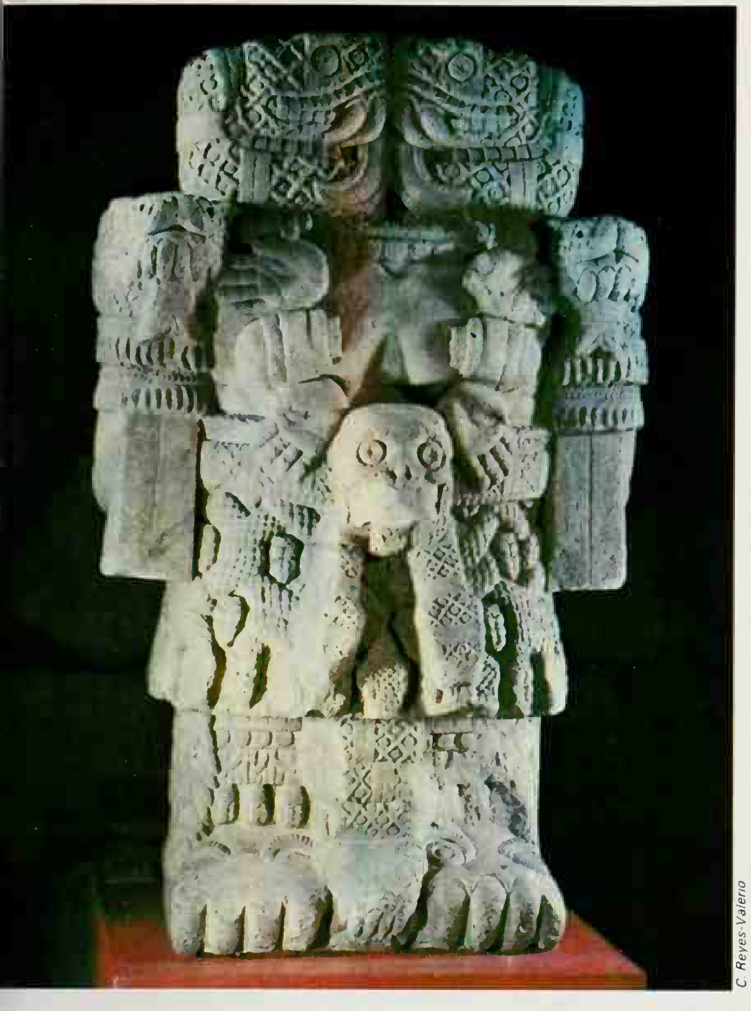
There were a vast number of omens to be observed, which were recorded soon after the Spanish Conquest of Mexico by Father Sahagun. But almost any event might be treated as an omen by people who thought that life was determined for them by outside powers. There were a great number of things to be learned from the flight and behaviour of birds. The cries of an owl at night were considered to be ominous and the movements of lizards and serpents were also of interest. The rattlesnake conveyed messages from the earth goddess.

There was also a good deal of interest in the weather and the directions of the winds, which was natural in an agricultural community. The peasant was always aware of the reliance of the community on the powers of nature. But it was realized that these powers might well be capricious. The water goddess, for instance, was described as a brilliant and capricious young woman. She controlled whirlpools as well as the quiet fertilizing rivers. At one of her ceremonies her priests had the right to beat and take clothing and jewellery from any unfortunate passer-by.

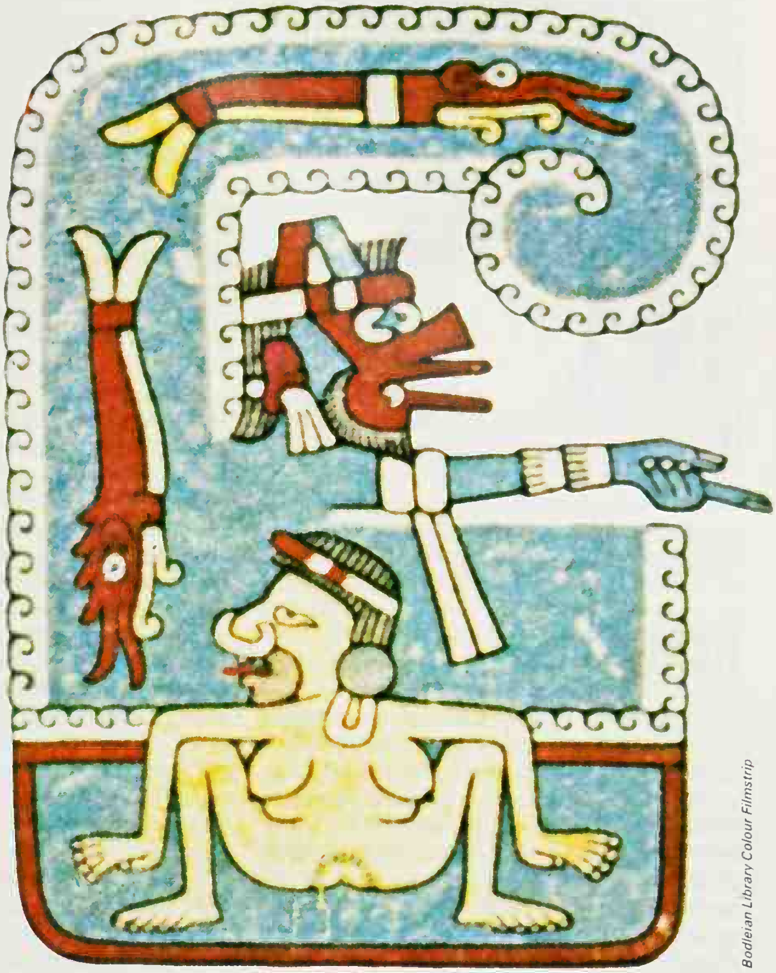
In the home of this goddess, where she lived with her husband Tlaloc, the god of all sources of water, there was continuous warm drizzle and brilliant rainbows shone over the masses of flowers and sweet smelling shrubs. They had four servants, the Tlaloques or Little Rains. These were cloud spirits who reclined in the rolling vapours, carrying different kinds of rain. One came from the East and brought the golden spring rains to fertilize the soil; another from the South brought warm blue rains to make all things fruitful; a third from the West brought the red rains which made the plants sleep as winter came; lastly the northern rain was dangerous, for he came from the realm where the sun never shone and so his rains brought destruction and were mostly hailstones.

The Tempting of Quetzalcoatl

But what would the rain do without the winds? The Aztecs said of Quetzalcoatl that as god of the wind he came to sweep the way for the rains and in this form he was a breath of life which made the vegetation of the earth sway like a serpent covered with green feathers. When his time of power was well advanced, the naughty water goddess decided to tempt him. She stripped naked and sat before him with her beautiful vulva opened, like the earth waiting for fertility from the breath of



C. Reyes-Valerio



Bodleian Library Colour Filmstrip

ife which was the wind. The somewhat grotesque painting of this in the Codex Laud also ombines the idea that the goddess of whirlools tempted the wind and so caused the reat breakers on the sea in hurricanes.

But Quetzalcoatl was also the morning tar and his path, first rising in the heavens nd then sinking, was also linked with the ertility myth. And it was the key of the tory of the divine King Quetzalcoatl.

The divine king brought blessings to the arth, improved agriculture, made the arts lourish and covered palaces with jewels nd precious feather decorations. He taught a philosophy of gentleness and austere sceticism, offering blood from his ears and imbs daily to the gods in the outer heaven. But when the revolutions of time brought the tars into a pattern which meant that his lanet was setting, he was tempted. The oddess approached him and visited his ourt, bringing with her many magicians nd enchanters, among whom was the black Tezcatlipoca. At a festival she offered the od-king a bowl of alcoholic pulque preared from the agave heart. Then as he ecame intoxicated she offered him magic mushrooms and induced a trance-like cstasy in which he abandoned his austerity nd raped her.

On awakening, appalled at his break vith the ascetic code of priestly behaviour, Quetzalcoatl left Mexico. He gave over his ower to Tezcatlipoca and sailed into the un, where his heart burnt up and ascended gain as the morning star. Already there vas a confusion between the god and the first king of the Toltecs, who was dedicated to the worship of Quetzalcoatl. The truth is that the concept of the god Quetzalcoatl was very ancient indeed but because it concerned an earthly king it was a myth which could be applied to any period in the past.

Left Coatlicue, the Aztec goddess of the earth, mother of life, death and the gods ***Right*** The Aztec water goddess tempting Quetzalcoatl, like the earth waiting for fertility from the 'breath of life', the wind which brought the refreshing rains

In the Quetzalcoatl myth, an account of wind and rain and the passing seasons, which promoted fertility and then passed on, had expanded into a universal parable of the human condition. We all follow this path of development, which ends in loss of energy and eventual death. We also share something of all primitive religion within our own personalities, for the gods of old Mexico, and of many other places, are expressions of images which lie deep in the structure of the human personality.

These natural gods, in spite of their raw and often horrific appearance in Mexican art, inspired great devotion and trust in the populace. The religion was not just a formality but a reality which people lived. It was a re-presentation of the natural universe of which they were part. The sense that mankind was an active part of the life of the whole universe was the driving force behind their artistic output. Whether it was a great image for a temple, or a little pot for use in the home, the work was an expression of the link between the universe and the ordinary human being.

End of the Aztec World

In the Aztec version of the final collapse of Mexico we find that not all the population fought the Spaniards. They moved only when led by the great nobles to whom they owed allegiance. Mostly they suffered passively, and acted bravely when called upon by the brilliantly feathered war leaders. Though decimated by the smallpox which killed the noble Cuitlahuac, who succeeded Moctecuzoma, the Aztecs continued to give battle with their Stone Age weapons against Spaniards clad in steel and armed with cannon. The young Cuauhtemoc was their last elected war leader. But finally he surrendered as the last buildings in the city of Cactus Rock were torn down. Later, when he made a brave effort to achieve freedom he was captured and strangled. But Cuauhtemoc became the national hero of modern Mexico; and his mother tongue, the ancient Nahuatl language, has become the language of poetry in Mexico.
(See also QUETZALCOATL.)

C. A. BURLAND

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The Old Testament attacks Baal worship but the religion of Israel was influenced by the great fertility god, the upholder of order against chaos

BAAL

THE WEST SEMITIC word *baal* was applied to men and gods to mean ownership. It usually referred to the ownership of a place, so that there were many local gods who were Baals of their own areas, but it could also refer to ownership of a sphere of interest, as in the case of Baal Berith, 'the god of the covenant', who presided over agreements, or even to a god's ownership of those who worshipped him.

From c 3000 BC probably, and certainly by about 2500 BC, the title was applied specifically to a god of the Amorites, a powerful group of Semitic nomads. He was the god of storm and the rain of winter, first found in Palestine and southern Syria, named Adad in Mesopotamian texts and Hadad in texts from Ras Shamra in northern Syria.

The texts found at Ras Shamra since 1929 contain versions, dating from about 1400 BC, of a large number of myths involving Baal, who was the most active deity in the fertility cult of the Canaanites, the early inhabitants of Syria and Palestine. This cult was particularly concerned with the winter rainfall, which was vital to the fruitfulness of flocks and fields. The texts make it possible to reconstruct the Canaanite cult of Baal. They sometimes confirm and sometimes correct the sporadic references in the Old Testament, which are generally criticisms of the abuses and grosser aspects of this Nature cult.

The Defeat of the Waters

The Baal myth of Ras Shamra describes in dramatic scenes how Baal (or Hadad) champions the gods and the order they sustain against the insults and threatened tyranny of the unruly waters, 'Prince Sea, even River the Ruler'. After a critical struggle Baal overcomes, slays and disperses the waters, distributing them so that they are a good servant rather than a bad master. This conflict is described as a fight for kingship, and the victor Baal is acclaimed as 'king', his kingdom being 'an everlasting kingdom'.

This was the Canaanite declaration of faith in the beneficence of Nature. It was an assurance to the worshippers and a relief to their fears and anxieties, which were expressed and purged by the drama vividly related in the texts. It was also an opportunity to influence the course of Nature by the speaking of words and possibly by an accompanying ritual in which Baal's victory was acted out and so magically recreated each year.

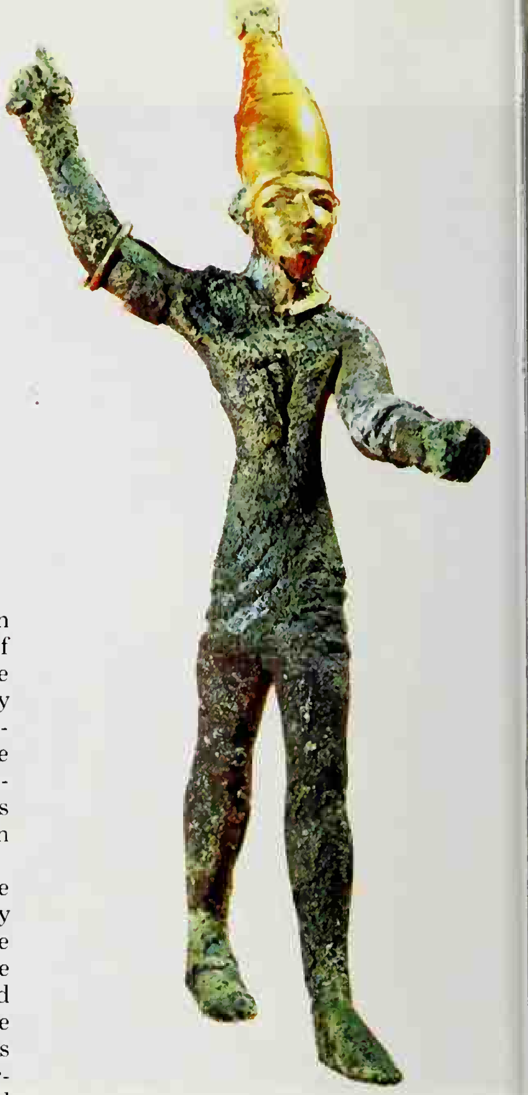
The main motifs of this Baal myth are reproduced in the Old Testament, notably in the psalms which assert or imply the kingship of God and in passages in the Prophets on the theme of the kingship of God and the maintenance of his order against the menace of Chaos in Nature and history. This was the theme of the Hebrew Feast of Tabernacles on the eve of the New Year, adapted from the chief seasonal festival in Canaan when the Israelites settled in Palestine, between c1225 and 1050 BC.

This same theme is the substance of hope for the future in apocalyptic literature (see APOCALYPSE). The imagery of the old Canaanite theme of the kingship of the god and his order in Nature, won in conflict with the unruly waters and certain sea-monsters, such as *ltn* (the Biblical Leviathan), 'the Primeval Serpent, the Tortuous One with Seven Heads' is re-echoed from the Canaanite New Year ceremony.

The Warrior Storm

This is perhaps most familiar to general readers in the vision of the emergence of the reign of God and his saints after the succession of bestial powers, which significantly came up 'from the sea' (in Daniel, chapter 7) and the culmination of the conflict against the bestial powers of evil in the establishment of the kingdom of God and his new creation, when 'sea shall be no more', in Revelation (chapter 21).

Baal's character as the storm god is expressed in a sculptured stele (an upright slab or pillar) found near his temple on the acropolis of Ras Shamra and dating probably from c 2100 BC. He is depicted as a helmeted warrior in a short kilt, striding into action, brandishing a mace (the weapon with which he overcomes Sea-and-River) and a spear, which is grounded, point downwards. The butt of the shaft of the spear is depicted as branching, and this has been taken to simulate forked lightning, which is regularly noted as the weapon of Baal-Hadad (or Mesopotamian Adad) in texts and in sculpture. However, a seal design from Ras Shamra suggests that the branching spear may depict a cedar tree, expressing Baal's significance as a god of vegetation, particularly associated with the cedars which are the most splendid trees of the mountains of his Canaanite home.



Baal, the cloud-mounter, god of the winter rains. Statuette of the 15th–14th centuries BC, now in the Louvre

The god's power of fertility is expressed by his association with the bull as his cult animal; he wears the bull's horns on his helmet. His stock epithet in the Baal myth is 'He who mounts the Clouds' (compare Yahweh, God of Israel, 'who makes the clouds his chariot'). The wavy lines shown beneath the feet of the god possibly represent the mountain tops and clouds (and again Yahweh 'treads the high places of the earth'). But they may also represent the waters below, over which he has triumphed.

The essential features of the warrior Baal are reproduced in the figurines of a young active god in bronze, sometimes inlaid in gold and silver, from various sites in Syria and Palestine. They indicate the widespread cult of the god, *the* Baal, the Master or Lord in the Nature worship of Canaan.

Baal, Zeus and Hercules

Baal was one of the Semitic gods whose cult penetrated to Egypt, possibly carried there by the many Semites deported from

Syria and Palestine in the various campaigns of the Pharaohs between the 15th and 13th centuries BC. The Pharaoh Rameses II (d 1224 BC) himself affected Syrian cults.

The most notable cult centre of Baal in Egypt was Baal Saphon near Pelusium, east of the Nile Delta. The name reflects the proper home of the god, Mount Saphon, the modern Jebel al-Aqra, the Mount Kasios of the Greek geographers, a kind of Canaanite Olympus on the northern horizon of Ras Shamra.

Greek authors knew of a temple of Zeus Kasios near Pelusium and an inscription mentioning Zeus Kasios has been found there. The assimilation of Baal, the storm god who 'mounts the clouds', with the supreme sky god Zeus was natural, and equally natural was the worship, on this featureless but dangerous coast, of the god who established his kingship after winning victory over the unruly waters.

As the god of Tyre, whose worship Jezebel is depicted in the Old Testament as striving so hard to promote in Israel, Baal was assimilated in the Greek period (after the 4th century BC) to Hercules, the active young god who also sustained order against Chaos, which was depicted, like one of Baal's adversaries in the struggle, as a many-headed monster of the watery wastes, the Hydra. (See HERCULES.)

A similar theme was known between 2000 and 1000 BC in Asia Minor, as shown by mythological texts from the ancient Hittite capital of Hattusas (modern Boghazkoi) where the god who successfully overcomes the sea-monster is Teshub, the weather god, who is represented in Hittite sculpture with the familiar features of the bronze figurines of Baal from Syria and Palestine.

The preoccupation with the fertility cult in Syria tended to give Baal-Hadad a predominance even beyond his proper sphere in Nature. It is significant that several of the kings of Damascus were called Ben-Hadad ('the son of Hadad'), which may have been a throne-name of them all. It is a fair inference that the name reflects the conception of the king as the earthly guarantee of the kingship of Baal and the stability of order against the menace of Chaos. It was probably a trend to monotheism (the worship of one god) in the conception of Baal of the Heavens (Baal-Shamayim) in Syria between about 1000 and 500 BC which made Baal such a dangerous rival to Yahweh in Israel and prompted Elijah to his famous challenge to the prophets of Baal on Carmel (I Kings, chapter 18).

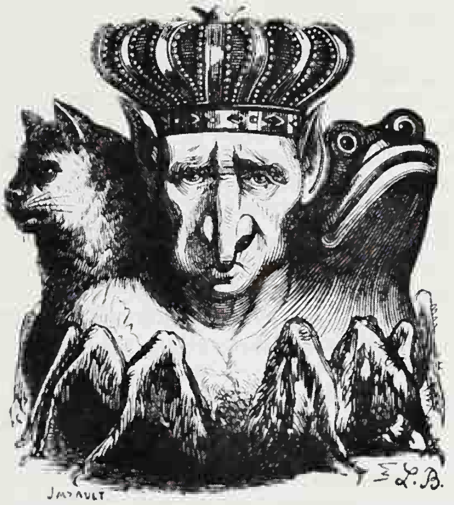
The Dying and Rising God

The bulk of the remainder of the Baal mythology in the Ras Shamra texts concerns Baal's conflict with Mot, the power of drought, sterility and death, where Baal is a dying and rising god, the spirit of vegetation which wilts and dies in summer but revives again with the winter rain. These texts relate to the seasonal ritual of the Syrian peasants.

After Baal has succumbed to Mot, the latter suffers the vengeance of Baal's sister, 'the Virgin Anat', who cuts him with a blade, winnows him with a shovel, parches him with fire, grinds him with a millstone and scatters him in a field. Here the rites of desacralization (freeing from holiness) of the first or last sheaves of the grain-harvest underlie the myth; such a rite, in fact, as is described in the Bible in Leviticus (chapter 2) which refers to the offering of the first sheaf, 'green ears of corn, dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears'.

Baal eventually revives, and there is the glad prospect of the skies raining oil and the wadis running with honey (again an aspect of the establishment of the order of God in the Old Testament). Finally, 'after seven years' Baal engages Mot in a great struggle and overcomes him. This may be related to the Hebrew custom of allowing the land to lie fallow in the seventh year, thus simulating a famine, when the sinister power of sterility was allowed to exhaust itself, in the hope that the next six years would be normal.

According to the 16th century demonologist John Wier, Baal had three heads: of a cat, a man and a toad. He spoke with a raucous voice and taught his followers guile, cunning and the ability to become invisible. From Collin de Plancy's *Dictionnaire Infernal*



Certain features of the myth suggest other rites mentioned in the Old Testament. On the death of Baal, 'the Virgin Anat' ranges the mountains searching for him with loud lamentation, suggesting the mourning for Hadad-Rimmon ('Hadad the Thunderer') in Zechariah (chapter 12) and the weeping for Tammuz by the women of Jerusalem (Ezekiel, chapter 8).

From the references in the Old Testament to repeated lapses to the cult of Baal and his female associates, we can infer that in settling in Palestine the Hebrews tended to assimilate the Baal cult without adapting it. Official authority was alarmed and the early calendar in Exodus (chapter 23) and the Ritual Code, also in Exodus (chapter 34), insisted that the festivals at the three great seasonal crises of the year be observed 'before Yahweh God of Israel', that is at the central sanctuary of the confederacy of Israel. Owing to this basic experience, Israel was able to transform the theme of the Canaanite New Year festival, the kingship of God won and sustained against the menace of Chaos, and develop it as a fundamental element of her own faith. The popular tendency, however, was to assimilate the grosser elements of Baal worship in the Canaanite fertility cult. To this the prophets are eloquent witnesses, especially Hosea, who inveighed against this materialistic Nature cult and the licentious rites of imitative magic with which it was associated. (See ASTARTE; SYRIA AND PALESTINE.)

JOHN GRAY

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Michael Holford

Babylonia

The area north of the head of the Persian Gulf, watered by the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, the centre of early civilization and religious development in the Middle East; in early times divided into two parts, the southern called Sumer and the northern Accad or Akkad.
See MESOPOTAMIA.

Hirmer Verlag

Bacchus

A name of Dionysus, the Greek god of fertility, wine and ecstatic frenzy, whose worshippers were called Bacchae or Bacchantes; Bacchanalia was the Latin name for the mysteries celebrated in the god's honour, originally confined to women, banned at Rome in 186 BC but reintroduced during the 1st century AD.
See DIONYSUS.

Bahais look forward to the religious and political unity of all mankind. Since the following story is historical, Persia, the old name for Iran, is used throughout.

BAHAIS

ON 23 MAY 1844 Mirza Ali Mohammed, son of a Persian merchant and a resident of Shiraz in the south-west of Persia, declared himself to be a manifestation of God on earth. He assumed the title *Bab* (Arabic for 'Gate') and predicted that an even greater manifestation was soon to appear, one who would usher in the dawn of a new age. Assisted by 18 'Letters of the Living' or disciples, the Bab hoped to pave the way for the coming of this divine messenger, who was to be known as Baha-Ullah, or Splendour of God.

Baha-Ullah duly appeared, after the death of the Bab, and the Bahai faith, as it is known today, takes its name from him. Bahais are those who accept Baha-Ullah as the manifestation of God for our age.

Today, over 100 years later, the Bahai faith has emerged from the obscurity of its beginnings in Persia and is now represented in countries and communities all over the world. The principal writings of the faith have been translated into over 400 languages and dialects, evidence of the appeal that it has exerted. The United States is one of the main strongholds of Bahaism.

Execution of the Bab

Belief in a 'Second Coming', when God will return to earth to establish peace and justice, is a theme common to many of the world's religions. In Islam the members of the Shi-ite sect expect the coming of the Mahdi ('guided one'), or Qaim ('he who shall arise'). The Shia believe that Mohammed, at his death, handed on his authority to Ali, his son-in-law, who in turn passed it on to 12 successive Imams or leaders, who were to act as spiritual messengers and guides. The last of the Imams disappeared mysteriously in 874 AD but his followers believed that they kept in contact with him through a succession of intermediaries or Babs.

When the Bab made his declaration in 1844, many flocked to his cause, calling themselves *Babis*. His descent from the Prophet Mohammed on both his father's and his mother's side, gave impetus to the Bab's cause.

But the Babis were not without enemies, for both the Persian government and the orthodox Moslem divines viewed the ever-increasing popularity of the new movement as a threat to their existence. The 'revolutionaries' were hounded from city to city, suffering many indignities. In Persia people were incited to whip the Babis and to humiliate their women. In one case a Babi was pierced through the nose and dragged by a cord through the streets.

The movement continued to flourish in spite of adverse conditions. The Bab spent the greater part of this period of his life being moved from one prison to another, and many of his followers were brutally massacred. But even from his prison cell at Mah-Ku the Bab continued to exert considerable influence. Mah-Ku lies in a remote part of north-west Persia, inhabited by the Kurds, a Moslem community of the Sunni sect, extremely hostile to the Shia. After a few months internment in this region the authorities were forced to remove the Bab, for he had so gained the confidence of the people and his warden that the term 'imprisonment' no longer applied. It was here that the Bab compiled the work known as the *Bayan*, in which he constantly refers to the 'greater one to come', to 'him whom God would make manifest'.

The Persian authorities hoped to stem the spread of the Babi religion by taking the Bab, then aged 30, to Tabriz for execution by shooting. The extraordinary events which took place on the day of the Bab's execution, 9 July 1850, are described by a contemporary follower of the Bab named Nabil in his book *The Dawnbreakers*. The city was in a state of turmoil. The Governor had washed his hands of the affair and it was left to the brother of the chief minister of the Shah to carry out the orders.

As the hour approached, a dishevelled youth threw himself at the master's feet and asked to be allowed to accompany him in death. His wish was granted and both the Bab and the youth were suspended by ropes from a nail in the prison yard, in such a way that the head of the youth rested on the breast of the master. When the clouds of smoke from the 750 rifles had cleared, only the youth was to be seen, alive and unharmed.

It was then discovered that the shots had only severed the ropes holding the prisoners, and the Bab was later found in his room, in conversation with his secretary. The officer in charge of the firing squad refused to repeat the order, when the Bab declared himself ready. A subordinate finally gave the order. Nabil says that as soon as the fatal shots had been fired, an exceptionally severe gale of dust shrouded the city in darkness for the rest of the day.

Fifty years later the Bab's remains were enshrined on Mount Carmel, near Haifa in Israel, and the site has become a revered centre of the Bahai faith.

Abdul-Baha, the chief missionary of Bahaism: released from prison in 1908, he travelled the world at the age of 70 to convert people to the new religion

Bahai Centre

The Bahai movement is based on the belief in Baha-Ullah as the messenger of God for our time. The Bahais believe that God himself is unknowable but that he communicates with men through manifestations, who reveal themselves from time to time on earth. These manifestations, who all derive from the same God, are the founders of the great religions of the world. When Baha-Ullah, in 1863, declared himself to be 'him whom God should make manifest', he not only fulfilled the prediction of the Bab, that a greater one was to come, but also claimed to be the most recent in a line of manifestations which has included Jesus, Mohammed, Zoroaster and Buddha. Each fulfilled God's purposes for *his* age but Jesus said, 'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth' (John, chapter 16). Bahais believe that with the revelation of Baha-Ullah, that time has come.

The Coming of Baha-Ullah

Mirza Hussain Ali, who declared himself to be the expected Baha-Ullah, was born in 1817 at Tehran. He was of noble descent and spent much of his early life in ministerial circles. He became an ardent follower of the Babi doctrine. After the Bab's execution, the movement split into two groups, those who followed Mirza Yahya, officially nominated by the Bab as his successor, and those who gathered themselves around Mirza Hussain Ali. The first group rapidly dwindled in numbers and eventually disappeared.

The Babi faith suffered a serious setback in 1853 when two Babis attempted unsuccessfully to assassinate the Shah of Persia. There resulted a purge of the Babis, in which all the leaders were killed except the future Baha-Ullah who was thrown into prison. It was here that he became aware of his mission on earth.

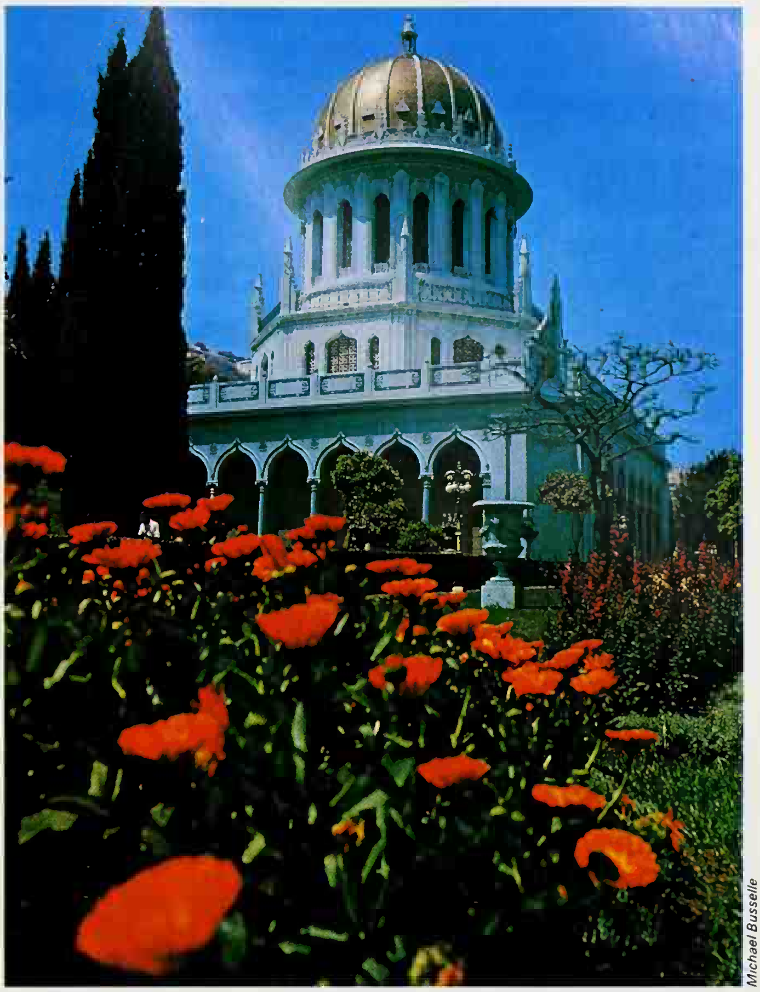
On release he was exiled with his family to Baghdad, outside Persian jurisdiction, and from there he continued to attract followers to the Babi faith. The Turkish authorities viewed the dissemination of his ideas with distaste and when in 1863 he retired for twelve days to a garden outside Baghdad and proclaimed himself to be the 'Promised One', as foretold by the Bab, they intervened and sent him first to Constantinople and then to Adrianople.

The scene of the declaration, which was the birth-moment of the Bahai faith proper, has been named the 'Garden of Ridvan'. The twelve days are celebrated annually by Bahais and known as the Ridvan Festival, from 21 April to 2 May.

The hostile pressures on Baha-Ullah, increased by the bitter dissension between himself and his half-brother, Mirza Yahya, culminated in several attempts by Mirza Yahya to murder Baha-Ullah. As a result Mirza Yahya and his associates were banished to Famagusta in Cyprus and Baha-Ullah was sent to the prison city of Acre where he died on 29 May 1892.

In spite of these confinements and harassments the Bahai faith began to make

Bahai Centre


Michael Busselle

Left Abdul-Baha, shown with his retinue at the base of the Eiffel Tower, Paris, about 1911
Right In this building on Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel, the remains of the Bab are enshrined. The site is the centre of the Bahai faith

widespread gains, even during the lifetime of Baha-Ullah. Baha-Ullah committed many of his teachings to so-called 'Tablets' which were passed on to his followers. While in Adrianople, he wrote to many of the political and religious leaders of the world, appealing to them to pay heed to his doctrines and in Acre he completed the *Kitabi Aqdas* (The Most Holy Book) which contains the essence of his beliefs.

The Oneness of Mankind

Bahais believe that there is one God for all mankind and therefore only one true religion. Although in the past God has manifested himself in different forms to suit the requirements of different ages, he nevertheless expounded through all his manifestations the same basic truths. Differences between religious movements have arisen, the Bahais claim, because the original teachings were misinterpreted. The coming of Baha-Ullah is a sign that man has reached a stage of maturity in which social and religious unity may at last be realized. Bahais devote themselves to this end.

Baha-Ullah himself, in his writings, gave much attention to the reorganization of social administration but the task of putting his ideas into practice was left to Abdul-Baha (1844–1921), eldest son of Baha-Ullah and 'Exemplar' and 'Interpreter' of his teachings.

To achieve world unity, Baha-Ullah advocated certain goals at which Bahais were to aim. They must seek to abolish all forms of prejudice with regard to colour, race, class and creed, thus breaking down national boundaries in preparation for an administrative body which will unite the whole world. A commonwealth of the world will be established. Men will be thought of no longer in terms of black or white, Christian or Buddhist, Russian or American, but as members of a united world community.

In this new order men and women will have equal status and all children will be given equal opportunities of education. An international system of currency will be introduced and an auxiliary world language (either newly invented or an already existing language) will be taught in schools.

In the meantime, by exemplary personal conduct Bahais can show the world the virtues of belief in their cause. They are forbidden to gamble and are discouraged from taking intoxicants and drugs

An Absence of Ritual

One outstanding feature of the Bahai faith is its lack of clergy and religious ritual. Bahais meet in a spirit of prayer more akin to a social gathering than a religious ceremony. Small Bahai communities all over the world, by grouping themselves into local and national 'spiritual assemblies', prepare themselves for the 'World Order of Baha-Ullah', the day when mankind shall become one. A spiritual assembly is formed wherever nine or more Bahais over the age of 21 congregate. These are subordinate to the supreme administrative body, the 'Universal House of Justice' which came into existence in 1963, 100 years after Baha-Ullah's declaration of his mission. Its seat is at Mount Carmel, at the shrine of the Bab while the shrine of Baha-Ullah lies to the North, a few miles outside Acre.

When Abdul-Baha was released from prison in 1908, Bahai communities had already been established in Chicago and nearby Kenosha. He travelled extensively in western Europe and the United States, although nearly 70 years old.

Today there are Bahai communities in every continent save Antarctica, and the Bahai faith is a growing one – save, alas, in its birthplace Persia (modern-day Iran). In the country of its origin the faith has suffered persecution at the hands of Moslem fundamentalists since the overthrow of the Shah in the 1970s.

MALCOLM SAUNDERS

FURTHER READING: John Ferraby's *All Things Made New* (Bahai, 1960) is a comprehensive guide to Bahaism. See also J. E. Esslemont, *Baha-Ullah and the New Era* (Bahai, 4th rev. edition, 1980) and R. Meyer, *Bahai: Follower of the Light* (Bahai, 1979).

To bring the beautiful Balder back from the dead, all created things wept, as they can still be seen to do after frost when the air grows warm; but the attempt failed

BALDER

BALDER IS ONE of the most puzzling figures in the company of the Scandinavian gods. He is said to be a son of the great god Odin and is one of the inhabitants of Asgard, the home of Odin and his attendant gods, but we know little about him except for his death. There is no reliable evidence for a cult of Balder, no ancient cult centres associated with his name, no recognizable figures or carvings of him, no symbols associated with his worship. His name occurs in an early German spell (the Second Merseburg Charm) and the name *Baldaeg* is found in genealogies of the early Anglo-Saxon kings as the son of Woden (Odin), but these do not prove that Balder was ever known as a god to the heathen Germans.

Balder has received so much attention because of the moving story of his death, told by Snorri Sturluson, a great master of Icelandic prose, in his *Prose Edda* of the 13th century. A little earlier, in the 12th century, another learned but less gifted writer, Saxo Grammaticus of Denmark, wrote a long Latin history of the kings of his country, and included in the early books many stories of the old gods, among them the death of Balder.

According to Saxo, Balder was a human hero, although it is implied that he was the son of a god, and he was assisted by supernatural women who gave him a special food, prepared from snakes, which made him impervious to wounds. Balder wished to marry the maiden Nanna but he had a rival in another warrior called Hoder (Hotherus) who also went to the supernatural women for help. Following their advice, Hoder travelled to a land of cold and darkness and won a magic sword from its guardian, Mimingus. This was the only weapon by which Balder could be slain. There were battles between Balder and Hoder, in some of which the gods themselves took part, but in the end Hoder won the maiden Nanna, and wounded Balder with the magic sword. Balder was carried into battle on a litter, and died three days later from his wound. Odin went to great lengths to avenge Balder, disguising himself as a smith in order to woo a princess called Rind, by whom he had a son who grew up to slay Hoder.

The Fatal Mistletoe

In the better-known version of the story as told by Snorri, Balder was the son of Odin and Frigg, and was of radiant beauty, a youth beloved by all. He had ominous dreams threatening some calamity, and in order to protect her son Frigg asked all living creatures and inanimate things to give her a solemn oath never to do Balder harm. After this the gods found it amusing to fling darts and weapons at Balder, knowing that he could not be hurt. But the god Loki desired Balder's death. He discovered that Frigg had neglected to take an oath from a tiny plant which grows on the oak, the mistletoe, since it seemed too young to matter. From it Loki made a dart which he gave to the blind god Hoder, suggesting that he fling it at Balder in sport. The dart pierced Balder, and he fell dead.

There was bitter grief among the gods, and they held a great funeral for Balder and burned him on his ship, together with Nanna his wife who had died of grief.

Odin sent a messenger on his own horse Sleipnir down the dark and perilous road to the kingdom of death and over the bridge of the dead, to bring Balder back. Hel, goddess of the realm bearing her name, agreed to release Balder on one condition: all things, on earth, living or dead, must weep him out of Hel. At Frigg's summons all created things, men and beasts, plants, stones and metals, did indeed weep, as they may be seen to do after frost when the air grows warm. But there was one old giantess in a cave, called Thokk, who churlishly refused to join in the mourning for Balder. She was really Loki in disguise, thwarting the desire of the gods, so that Balder remained in Hel.

The Lament for Balder

Other references to Balder in the Norse poems are brief but there are allusions to Odin's attempts to save Balder from death, to Loki's part in his slaying and to the funeral of Balder attended by all the gods, a representation of which is said to have been carved in an Icelandic hall of the 10th century. Certain elements of the tale, then, go back into the pre-Christian period but it is very difficult to decide whether Snorri or Saxo is the more reliable.

Statue by H. E. Freund in Copenhagen of the god Loki, who caused the death of Balder. Balder was mortally wounded by a dart made of mistletoe, which had been overlooked when all created things swore never to harm Balder

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

There are two separate ideas which appear to be deeply rooted in pre-Christian thought. First, Balder was either a son or a follower of the god Odin who, although god of the dead, was unable to save him from death. Odin's failure to do so brought about his own doom and that of all the gods at Ragnarok (the destruction of the gods). There are implications that a hostile power in the underworld struck at the gods through Balder, represented in Snorri's tale by the malice of Loki.

Secondly, the radiant god struck down by death and mourned by all creation strongly suggests a memory of a fertility cult, in which men lamented the death of their god. Their lament brought him back from the dead, so that spring returned to the world. The dying Balder carried round in a litter recalls similar traditions concerning Freyr and Balder's name, like that of Freyr, is thought by some to mean 'Lord' (see FREYR). Some have seen in this a likeness to the custom of weeping for the dead god in the Near East (see APHRODITE; DYING GOD) although it should be noted that there is no resurrection or rebirth in the story of Balder.

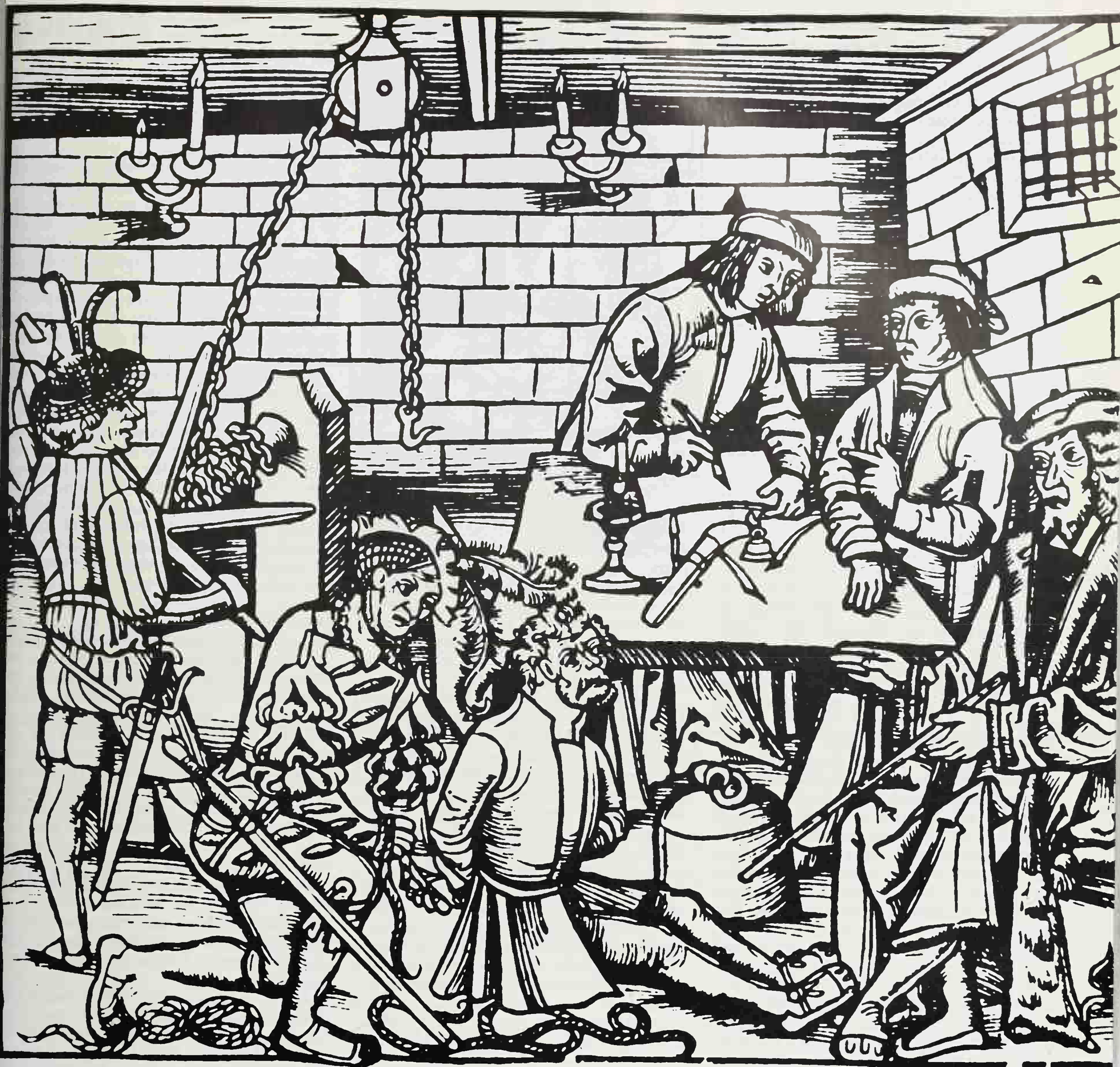
The connection with mistletoe, of which Frazer made so much in *The Golden Bough*, is itself problematical. There are traditions of a sword called Mistletoe elsewhere in Norse tradition, and there is also a very famous sword called Mimming, the same name as that of the sword's guardian in Saxo's story. Mistletoe does not grow in Iceland or western Norway, and this may be a foreign element imported into the North, replacing an earlier motif of a sword and a tree in the otherworld. The motif of a plant, not included in a general pact, which is used to slay a hero is one found in folktales of the Near East, and in a medieval Jewish legend about the cross of Christ.

Balder and Christ

The Balder story has reached us in relatively late literary sources, and the possibility of outside literary influences has to be borne in mind. There are certain striking resemblances in Snorri's version to legends about the crucifixion of Christ, and some scholars have suspected strong Christian influences. The Anglo-Saxon poem on Christ's cross, known as *The Dream of the Rood*, has a reference to all creation weeping for its king when Christ was on the cross. There are also folklore elements in the story, in the idea that the moisture of a thaw is Nature weeping for Balder, and in references by Snorri to a flower called Balder's brow and by Saxo to a burial mound in Denmark where Balder was said to be buried, out of which a stream flowed when men tried to break into it.

Indeed the whole subject of Balder is an extremely complex one but while scholars argue as to the earliest form of the tale of his death, there is no doubt that elements of the story at least formed an important part of the pagan lore of early Scandinavia.

H. R. ELLIS DAVIDSON



Mansell collection

A 16th century German woodcut showing a victim accused of witchcraft being tortured to extort a confession. One judge is questioning the prisoner, while another directs a scribe to write down the confession

n ten years at Bamberg some 600 people were xecuted as witches in a persecution instigated y the 'Witch Bishop', Gottfried von Dornheim

BAMBERG WITCHES

DOMINATING THE MINDS of witch-hunters n the time of the great persecutions in urope was the belief that it was the duty f Christians to rescue heretics and pagans rom the hideous fate which awaited them fter death. Long before, St Augustine had tated his conviction that 'not only every agan but that every Jew, heretic and schis-natic will go to the eternal fire . . . unless efore the end of his life he be reconciled and restored to the Catholic Church'. The outcome of this attitude was the imposition of a veritable hell on earth upon thousands of human beings with the object of saving them from the terrors of hell in the next world.

The horrors of the persecution were probably worse in Germany than in any other part of Europe. Witch trials began there in the mid-15th century but the bulk of the trials date from after 1570, at the time of the Counter Reformation, when the Roman Catholic Church began to roll back the tide of Protestantism and every form of heresy, including witchcraft, came under fierce attack.

Between 1609 and 1622 over 300 people were executed for witchcraft in the state of Bamberg alone. The accused were tortured without regard for age or sex. In 1614 a woman of 74 died undergoing torments 'up to the third grade'.

The Witch Bishop

From 1623 to 1632 the state of Bamberg, later described as 'the shrine of horror' was ruled by a fanatical witch-hater, the Prince-Bishop Gottfried von Dornheim. Known as 'the Witch Bishop', he established an extremely efficient witch-hunting organization, under a subordinate, Suffragan Bishop

Friedrich Förner, assisted by a council of lawyers. Special prisons were set up, the most notorious being the *Hexenhaus* or Witches House, where the captives were interrogated and tortured. A minimum of 600 people were burnt as witches during this decade.

It was considered essential that the accused should confess to witchcraft, and no efforts were spared to obtain confessions. The means employed included roasting on an iron chair, rending the flesh with red-hot pincers, crushing the legs, dislocating the shoulders and applying thumbscrews.

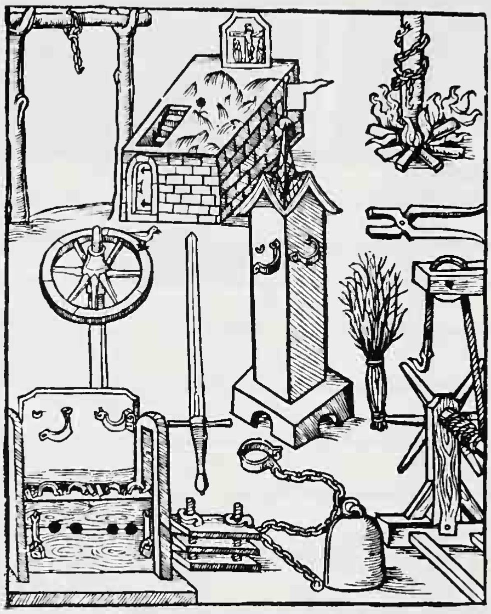
It was exceedingly dangerous to express the slightest doubt as to the guilt of anyone who was accused or to question the methods of the courts for, as soon became obvious, the authorities were determined that, once arrested, no prisoner should escape the stake. This the liberal-minded Dr Haan, Vice-Chancellor of Bamberg, who had shown signs of leniency in his dealings with accused witches, discovered to his cost when he in turn was denounced as a witch. Under torture he admitted his guilt in full and denounced five leading burgomasters as fellow-sorcerers. This did not save him, for in 1628 the kindly Vice-Chancellor and his wife and daughter were burned as witches.

The dreadful situation in which the five burgomasters now found themselves is revealed in a letter written by one of their number, Johannes Junius, who had occupied this position of honour since 1608. Now, at the age of 55, he was suddenly denounced as a witch on the testimony of Dr Haan and others. He was accused of worshipping Satan, desecrating the sacred host, having sexual intercourse with a succubus (a demon in female form) and riding to the witches' sabbath on the back of a black dog.

His letter, addressed to his daughter and smuggled out of prison by a bribed jailer, conveys the agony of mind and body of an innocent man caught up in the mesh of the witch-hunters, and the sense of hopelessness that soon destroyed all power to resist. 'For whoever comes into the witch prison,' he wrote, 'must become a witch or be tortured until he invents something out of his head and, God pity him, bethinks him of something.' Junius described the torture of the thumbscrews, the mildest of all the engines of torment. 'And then came also – God in his highest heaven have mercy – the executioner, and put the thumbscrews on me, both hands bound together, so that the blood spurted from the nails and everywhere, so that for four weeks I could not use my hands, as you can see from my writing.'

During his examination a blemish was discovered on his right side, which being impervious to pain was assumed to be a Devil's mark, the sign of the Christian's submission to Satan. This further evidence seems to have been hardly necessary in view of the fact that under torture he confessed in full to the charges against him, and on 6 August 1628 he died at the stake.

Father Friedrich von Spee, a Jesuit whose hair had turned prematurely grey as the result of his experiences as a confessor of witches in neighbouring Würzburg, revealed the effects of torture on the human mind in a book which he wrote in 1631: 'the most robust who have thus suffered have affirmed that no crime can be imagined which they would not at once confess to if it could bring down ever so little relief and they would welcome ten deaths to escape repetition.'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Some of the instruments of torture used in the Bamberg witch trials

Man in Black

Hans Petz from Steinbach, a court official in the district of Untermain, finally confessed after he had been subjected to such tortures as the application of thumbscrews and leg vises and the stocks. For three and a half hours he was suspended by a rope, eight feet from the ground, while a stone weighing 20 pounds hung from his toes. He admitted the following:

'That he had committed adultery more than one hundred times with Priestiklin of Steinbach and had copulated with her standing and in other ways. One day, while standing near her at a fountain and touching her on the body, she was suddenly transformed into the terrifying black figure of a man. His hands were rattling and on his right leg he had a cloven hoof, by which Petz recognized with whom he had been trafficking. This character called on Petz to deny God and to fetch the sacred host when he went to supper . . . Some time later she met him, when she had regained her natural form and they continued their sexual relationship, but by now it had become cold and lacking in love. In all he went to five witches' dances and at one of them it was discussed how the crops could best be spoiled.'

Graf von Lamberg,
Hexenprozessen in Bamberg

The Witch Industry

The speed and efficiency of the court procedure would be unbelievable if one were not aware that the machinery was generously lubricated with money exacted from the estates of the accused. Within a matter of three weeks from the date of her arrest in June 1629, Frau Anna Hansen had been interrogated and tortured, had confessed, had ratified her confession and had been beheaded and burned. A prisoner who displayed any tendency to delay his inevitable death by obduracy could always be persuaded otherwise by the application of those Bamberg specialities, flaming feathers dipped in sulphur applied to the armpits and groin, or a scalding bath to which lime had been added.

Witch-hunting in Bamberg, as elsewhere in Europe, involved a whole industry of interested parties whose income depended on a steady flow of victims. They ranged from the judges who tried the cases down to the merchants who supplied the timber for the execution fires. The whole cost of trial imprisonment and execution was borne by the estate of the prisoner or, if he had no property, by his relatives or by the loca authority.

Anyone unfortunate enough to be accused had to contend not only with the genuine belief in the existence of witches of a majority of the population, and with the clergy's determination to save his soul from hellfire, but also with the vested interests of those whose pockets were lined by his execution. The result was a vicious circle of torture, death and the betrayal of friends. Whenever the confiscation of the property of the accused was suspended, the number of executions always declined.

End of the Terror

Refugees from the terror fled to the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, where they attempted to arouse concern about the travesties of justice at Bamberg. Father Lamormaini, the Emperor's confessor, told him of the disquiet created by the atrocities, and another Jesuit said that the victims, far from being execrated as witches, were rapidly becoming the objects of popular sympathy. Councillor Dümler of Bamberg described to the Emperor how his wife had been cruelly tortured and burned at the stake although pregnant.

In time, the Emperor responded to the general clamour by ordering certain legal reforms, including legal representation of the accused and the ending of the confiscations of property. Torture, however, was not abolished.

After 1630 the witch-hunt declined in intensity. In that year Bishop Förner died. He was followed two years later by his master, the Witch Bishop. The invasion of Germany by Gustavus Adolphus, the Protestant King of Sweden, distracted attention from witchcraft to the problems created by the presence of a victorious arch-heretic on Catholic soil. In 1630 there were 24 executions and in the following year none.

The horrors of German witch-hunting, however, were perpetrated by Protestants as well as Roman Catholics. It is on record that a Lutheran named Benedict Carpzov admitted ordering the executions of at least 20,000 victims in Saxony.

With the gradual decline of belief in the Devil, the fear of witchcraft subsided. Concurrently, the burning need to rescue the heretic or witch from the terrors of hellfire by the infliction of agonies in this life gradually lost its relevance.

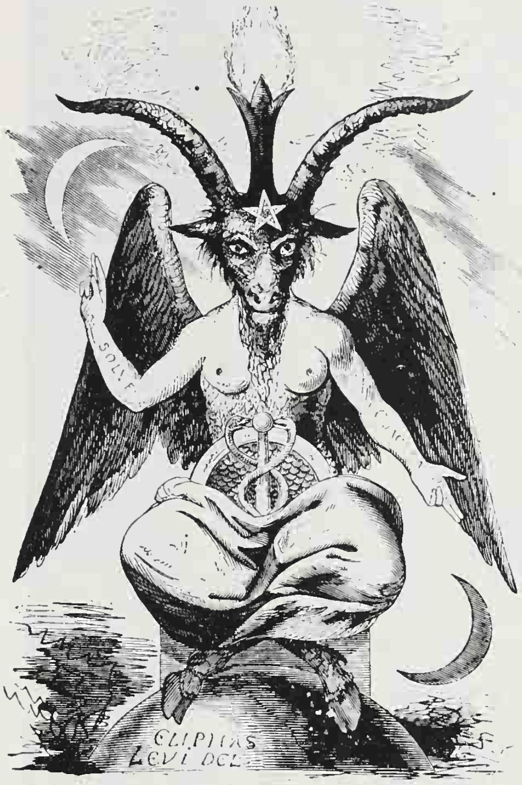
ERIC MAPLE

BAPHOMET

N OCTOBER 1307 Philip IV of France ccused the Order of Knights Templar of eresy and homosexual vice. Whether the ccusations were true is uncertain, though he French king's greed for the Order's normous wealth and the fact that the nights' confessions were extorted by tor-ure and threats have made many historians uspicious (see KNIGHTS TEMPLAR).

One of the accusations was that the Templars worshipped an idol named Bap-omet. This was a head, sometimes said o be a human skull, sometimes a stuffed uman head, sometimes a head with three aces. The knights were accused of believing hat the head was the source of their riches nd also the source of fertility: it made the rees blossom and the earth produce crops. here were supposed to be several of these eads, kept at different Templar centres. One was described as being made of metal nd having a face like a human face, with urly black hair.

Cults of the head as the seat of life and ertility, evidenced by its ability to grow a rop of hair, are known from many parts of ne world (see HEAD) but very few of the Templars confessed to worshipping the ead. Of 231 knights examined by the ope's Commissioners, only 12 admitted nowing anything about the head, as against 83 who confessed that they had renounced hrist and 180 who confessed to defiling the ross in various ways.



The Baphomet of Mendes, or Satanic goat of the witches' sabbath, drawn by the 19th century French magician Eliphas Levi

The name Baphomet itself is a puzzle. It is usually explained as a corruption of Mahomet, which was spelled Bafomet in Provence, the centre of the Cathar heresy (see CATHARS) with which some authorities believe the knights were infected. Alternatively, Montague Summers, the learned though unduly credulous historian of witchcraft and Satanism, suggested that the name was a combination of two Greek words (*baphe* and *metis*) and meant 'absorption into wisdom'; the wisdom being the knowledge of the god who had really created the world and man, and of whom Christ was an evil enemy.

In France in the 19th century Eliphas Levi drew the picture reproduced here, as an illustration to his book *The Doctrine and Ritual of High Magic* (see LEVI). He called it the Sabbatic Goat or Baphomet of Mendes, combining in one image the idol of the Templars, the Tarot card called the Devil, the Satan of the witches' sabbath who appeared as a goat, and the divine he-goat worshipped in classical times at Mendes in Egypt and said to copulate with its female devotees, as the Devil did with witches.

Levi called the drawing 'a pantheistic and magical figure of the Absolute', a diagram of the god who is the sum total of everything in the universe. The figure contains symbols of the four elements, the head standing for fire, the wings for air, the scales for water, the legs for earth. The torch is a symbol of divine revelation, the pentagram of human intelligence, the white and black crescent moons of good and evil, the caduceus of the union of the sexes, the breasts and hands of maternity and toil, two of the penalties for the sin of Adam and Eve but also, according to Levi, 'the signs of redemption'.

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iving things cannot survive without water, and ater washes away dirt. The interplay of these vo facts lies behind the baptismal ceremonies f Christianity and other religions

BAPTISM

APTISM IS KNOWN generally as the rite of nitiation into membership of the Christian Church. Most people probably regard it as riginating from the baptism of Jesus by ohn the Baptist, an incident which is raphically recorded in the New Testament nd frequently depicted in Christian art. But ritual washing or immersion in water vas already an ancient and widespread practice before that time, and various meanings vere attached to it. To understand the ull significance of Christian baptism, it is ecessary first to appreciate the varied symbolic roles of water in religion. (See also VATER.)

In the creation myths of many peoples vater is the substance out of which the vorld, or the creator of the world, originlly emerged. The ancient Egyptians magined that in the beginning there was nly a featureless expanse of water, called Nun. Out of this the primeval hill first merged, followed by the creator god Atum, vho stood on it to begin the work of creatng the universe. In Babylonian myth the irst gods are produced by the intercourse f the salt waters (Tiamat) and the fresh waters (Apsu). Later, the Babylonian god Marduk slays Tiamat, which is conceived of as a great monster, and fashions the universe out of its body.

In these ancient traditions water was regarded as the source of life, a belief which was strengthened by the fact that man and all other living creatures need water to maintain life. The idea of water as a life-giving substance has found expression in many religions in the idea of a mystic 'water of life' or 'fountain of life'.

The cleansing property of water also acquired religious significance as a means or symbol of ritual and spiritual purification: thus in Psalm 51 the petition is made to God: 'Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity . . . purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'

The Salvation of Pharaoh

It is not surprising, therefore, to find in the earliest religious writings so far known, the *Pyramid Texts* of Egypt, which date from about 2500 BC, that water has both a revivifying and a purifying role. These texts are concerned with the mortuary ritual practised to ensure the resurrection of the dead pharaoh to a blessed and eternal life, and they illustrate the ideas and beliefs of the Egyptians at this time. Several of them refer to a lake in the next world in which the sun-god Re revivifies himself each morning, and in which the dead king will also bathe and be revivified. The texts also show that ritual lustrations (washings) were frequent during the ritual of embalming, their purpose being both to purify the corpse from the contamination of death and to revivify it. The ritual was patterned on the rites believed to have been performed by various deities to raise the dead god Osiris to life again. The dead pharaoh was ritually identified with Osiris, in the belief that the re-enactment of the rites would similarly resurrect him to a new life. (See BOOK OF THE DEAD.)

The ancient Egyptian evidence is especially important because it presents so graphically the two aspects of water combined in a single ritual process of salvation. The water cleanses the body of the deceased from the corruption of death and also revivifies or regenerates it for a life of eternal blessedness. This twofold process for the achievement of a blessed immortality is not found again until the emergence of Christianity. But ritual ablution as an initiatory rite or for spiritual rebirth was practised in the mystery religions of the Graeco-Roman world, and there are interesting comparisons with Christian baptism.

Washing the Pig

As a purificatory rite only, bathing in the sea was an important part of the initiatory ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the oldest mystery cult of ancient Greece. On the second day of its Greater Mysteries initiates hastened down to the sea, each carrying a small pig. They washed both themselves and the pigs in the sea as an act of ritual cleansing. The pigs were subsequently sacrificed, their blood being considered a potent purificatory agent against demonic evil. (See ELEUSIS.)

It is in the mysteries of Cybele and Attis that we meet the most savage form of a regenerative bath. The rite was known as the *taurobolium*. The initiate descended into a pit and was bathed in the blood of a bull sacrificed above him. (There is mention also of a *criobolium*, which involved the slaughter of a ram.) The first documentary evidence of the rite dates from the 2nd century AD.

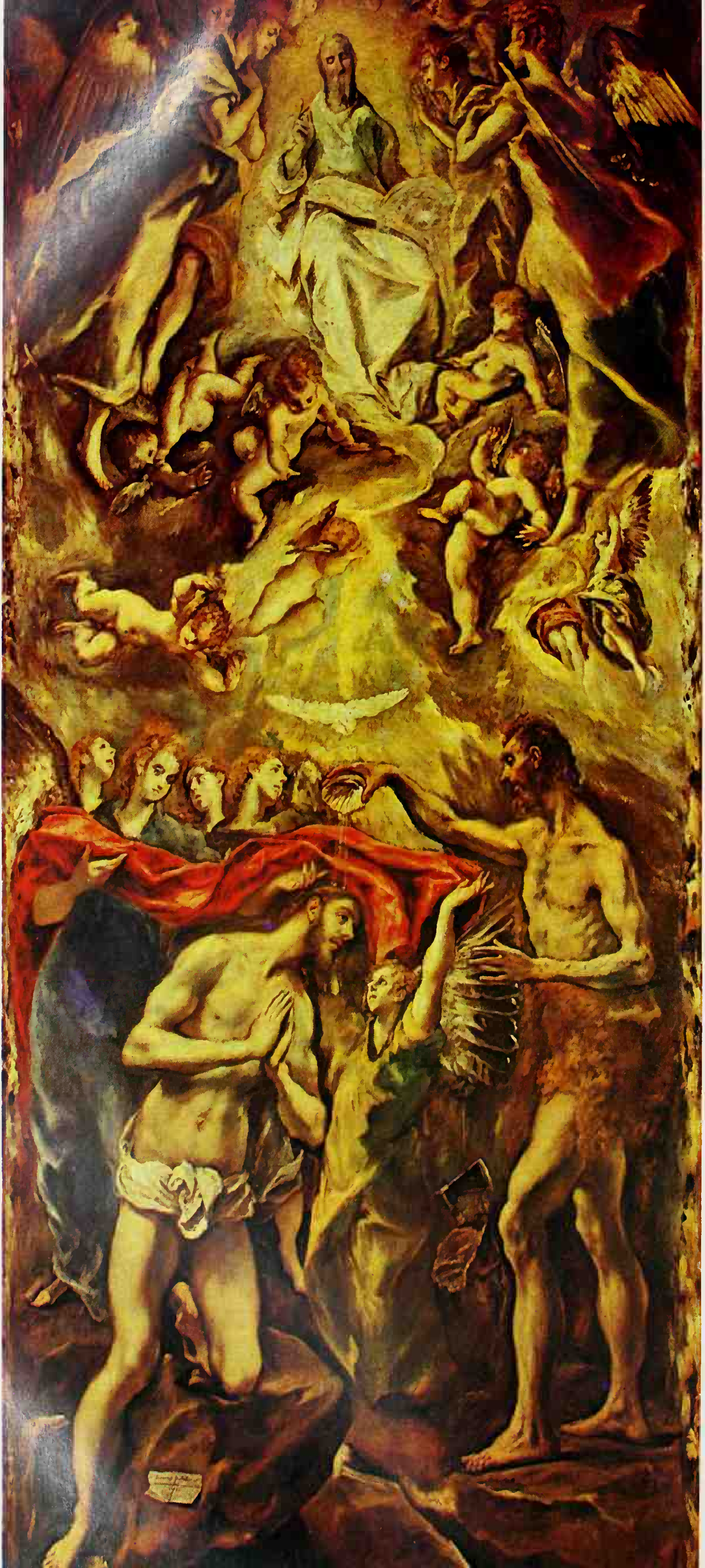
The rite seems sometimes to have been primarily a sacrifice for well-being of some kind; but its regenerative function is shown by certain inscriptions which use the word *renatus* (reborn) of the initiate or refer to the day of the taurobolium as his birthday. Some of the ideas that underlie this rite would seem to be obvious: the bull has ever symbolized strength and virility; and its blood is its life-substance. But in what manner the bull was associated with Attis, a 'dying-rising god', and in what sense the devotee was reborn or rejuvenated by the taurobolium is not clear. (See CYBELE.)

Ritual washing for various purposes was an ancient custom among the Hebrews; after being healed of leprosy, for instance, or after touching a corpse. Jesus is reported to have healed a blind man by sending him to wash in a pool, after anointing his eyes with clay (John, chapter 9). These examples show the belief in the power of ritual washing to remove ritual 'uncleanness' and in the curative property of water. But more significant as a forerunner of early Christian baptism was the ritual bath which had to be taken by converts to Judaism. This rite was essentially a purification from heathenism, in preparation for membership of the holy people of Yahweh, the God of Israel. An essential requirement was the total immersion of the candidate.

The Baptism of Jesus

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the excavations at Qumran of the settlement of the community which owned them, have shed much light on the nature of the baptism of Jesus. The Qumran Covenanters, who regarded themselves as a holy community within Israel, would admit a new member after public repentance and baptism. A passage from the scroll known as the *Manual of Discipline* says 'that his flesh will be cleansed by the sprinkling of water for impurity and by the sanctification of himself with purifying water'. The large cisterns, with steps descending into them, found at Qumran indicate that baptism was by total immersion.

Before considering the Christian accounts of the type of baptism practised by John the



The purifying properties of water lie behind its use in both pagan and Christian rituals *Left* The baptism of Christ in the river Jordan by John the Baptist, a painting by El Greco *Right* Painting from an Egyptian tomb, c1380 BC: two streams of water are poured over the dead man's head to purify the corpse from the contamination of death and to revivify it

Michael Holford

Baptist, it is useful to look at the account in he *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived in the 1st century AD. This is significant in the light of the evidence from Qumran since the area of John the Baptist's activity was nearby.

> For John was a pious man, and he exhorted the Jews who practised virtue and exercised righteousness towards each other and piety toward God, to come together for baptism. For thus it seemed to him would baptismal ablution be acceptable, if it were not used to beg off sins committed, but for the purification of the body when the soul had previously been cleansed by righteous conduct.

t is in this setting of contemporary Jewish itual ablutions, emphasizing the purifying ction of water, that the earliest form of Christian baptism, particularly that of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, is to be understood. This is clear from the earliest ccount in the gospels (Mark, chapter 1). John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for he forgiveness of sins. And there went out o him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized y him in the river Jordan, confessing their ins . . . In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.'

The disciples of Jesus, under his direction, apparently baptized their converts and, lthough there is some obscurity as to whether Jesus himself actually baptized, early tradition represents him commanding his disciples to do so. 'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost' (Matthew, chapter 28). This commandment that baptism should be 'in the name' of the three Divine Persons, who were in later Christian doctrine to constitute the Trinity, seems to indicate a later elaboration of the original formula. But the use of the Trinitarian formula soon became established as orthodox doctrine, and it has continued to be regarded as an essential condition for a valid baptism.

This evidence of the original form of Christian baptism, and its close connection with contemporary forms of Jewish baptism, shows that baptism at first was essentially a *purificatory* rite, which was intimately linked with repentance of sins. It was the essential requirement for admission to membership of the Christian community and it was closely related to the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, who would shortly return with supernatural power to establish the kingdom of God. But there is no suggestion that the rite effected some kind of spiritual transformation of the baptized person, such as might be described as 'rebirth' or 'regeneration'.

Ritual Death and Rebirth

It was St Paul who was responsible for transforming this original form of baptism into the sacramental rite of rebirth which baptism became in the Christian Church. This decisive change is first expressed in the 6th chapter of Paul's letter to the

A Baptismal Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, who of thy great mercy didst save Noah and his family in the ark from perishing by water; and also didst safely lead the children of Israel thy people through the Red Sea, figuring thereby thy holy Baptism; and by the Baptism of thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ, in the river Jordan, didst sanctify Water to the mystical washing away of sin; We beseech thee, for thine infinite mercies, that thou wilt mercifully look upon this Child; wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost . . .

The Book of Common Prayer

An Aztec Prayer

From the Aztec ceremony of bathing the newborn:

Merciful Lady Chalchiuhtlicue, thy servant here present is come into the world . . . Wash him and deliver him from impurities . . . Cleanse him of the contamination he hath received from his parents: let the water take away the soil and the stain, and let him be freed from all taint. May it please thee, O Goddess, that his heart and his life be purified, that he may dwell in this world in peace and wisdom. May this water take away all ills . . . wash from him the evils which he beareth from before the beginning of the world.

Bernardino de Sahagun
Historia de las Cosas de la Nueva Espana
(trans. H. B. Alexander)

Romans, which was written about AD 56 or 57. The passage concerned needs quotation and commentary to bring out its full significance.

> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that the sinful body might be destroyed and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This passage, full as it is of esoteric imagery, clearly sees baptism in a very different way from that of the earlier ritual cleansing, which initiated the convert into the Christian community. Instead, Paul presents the rite as a ritual death and rebirth, which simulates the death and resurrection of Christ.

There is a parallelism of imagery between the burial of Christ in the tomb and the burial of the new convert under the baptismal water. In other words, in baptism the Christian is ritually assimilated to Christ in his death, dying to his former self, so that as Christ was resurrected from the dead, the Christian, thus ritually incorporated in Christ, will rise to a new immortal life.

This Pauline doctrine of baptism recalls, in a striking manner, the assimilation of the dead with Osiris in the ancient Egyptian mortuary cult. Like the Egyptian rite, baptism for Paul effects rebirth or transformation to a new exalted state of being. Paul's view had a decisive influence and found dramatic expression in the baptismal ritual of the Early Church. Special baptisteries were constructed to allow total immersion. The candidates took off their clothes and descended into the water, thus ritually symbolizing a dying to their old selves. On emerging from the baptismal water, they were clothed in white robes, received a new name and given mystic food of milk and honey, so proclaiming their rebirth by baptism to a new life in Christ.

Picturepoint London

Keystone Press Agency

Right **Christian baptism: it used to be widely believed that if the child did not cry, the rite had failed to drive the Devil out of him** ***Below*** **Communal baptism of Jehovah's Witnesses at Twickenham rugby ground**

Baptism of Babies

In the early period of the Church, most candidates for baptism were adults. Often converts put off baptism until near death, in the belief that thereby they would die purified from sin and spiritually reborn. But as time went by, the custom of baptizing infants gradually prevailed. It was natural that Christian parents should want their children to enjoy the spiritual benefits of baptism but the practice was decisively affected by the doctrine of Original Sin.

According to this doctrine, a newborn child, though incapable of actual sin, was held to be subject to God's wrath because it shared in the inherited sin of mankind (see FIRST MAN). A baby which died unbaptized was condemned to hell (or to Limbo, a special compartment of hell). The practice of infant baptism led to the introduction of the smaller elevated font, which replaced the baptistery of earlier churches: and also to the separation of baptism from confirmation, which was originally part of the baptismal ceremony in the Early Church and was regarded as imparting the gift of the Holy Spirit to the baptized through the laying-on of the bishop's hands. Another important development was that the grace of baptism was believed to be conveyed *ex opere operando*, which means by virtue of the enactment of the rite itself. Emphasis was laid upon the correct 'form' and 'matter': the Trinitarian formula had to be used, and the water must flow over the candidate and not merely be sprinkled upon him.

The Reformation did not disturb the status of baptism as the essential rite of Christian initiation for Protestants as well as for Catholics. Indeed certain sects such as the Anabaptists and Baptists laid primary stress on its importance; but they insisted on a return to adult baptism by immersion, maintaining that baptism should signify the deliberate acceptance of Christ, which was impossible for an infant.

Today baptism is usually taken to symbolize acceptance of membership in the Christian community, rather than to effect a mystic rebirth, such as Paul taught. The Roman Catholic Church retains the most elaborate baptismal ritual in the West: it includes preliminary exorcisms, placing of salt in the candidate's mouth, anointing with spittle and oil, and the holding of a candle.

S. G. F. BRANDON

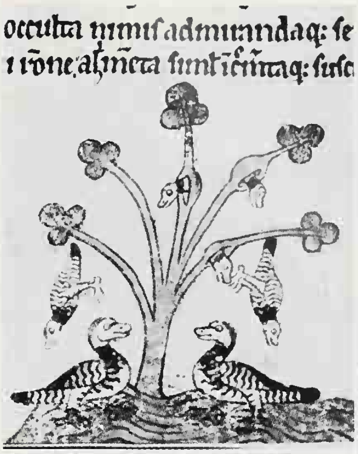
FURTHER READING: G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1973); M. Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Scribner, 1969); A. Carson, *Baptism* (Kregel, 1981).

C. Nelson Stewart

Bards

Poets and storytellers, regarded in northern Europe as possessing magical powers and closely associated with the Druids; in Wales the 'chief of song' was chosen at a bardic contest, a tradition which lives on in the Welsh Eisteddfod.

See POETS



British Museum

Barnacle Goose

For centuries the Irish ate the barnacle goose during Lent, convinced that it was a species of fish; its then unknown breeding habits and association with the sea prompted mythical explanations of its origins; it was variously thought to hatch from shell-fish, from barnacle-covered driftwood, or from a fruit like a melon.

See GOOSE

FRANCIS BARRETT

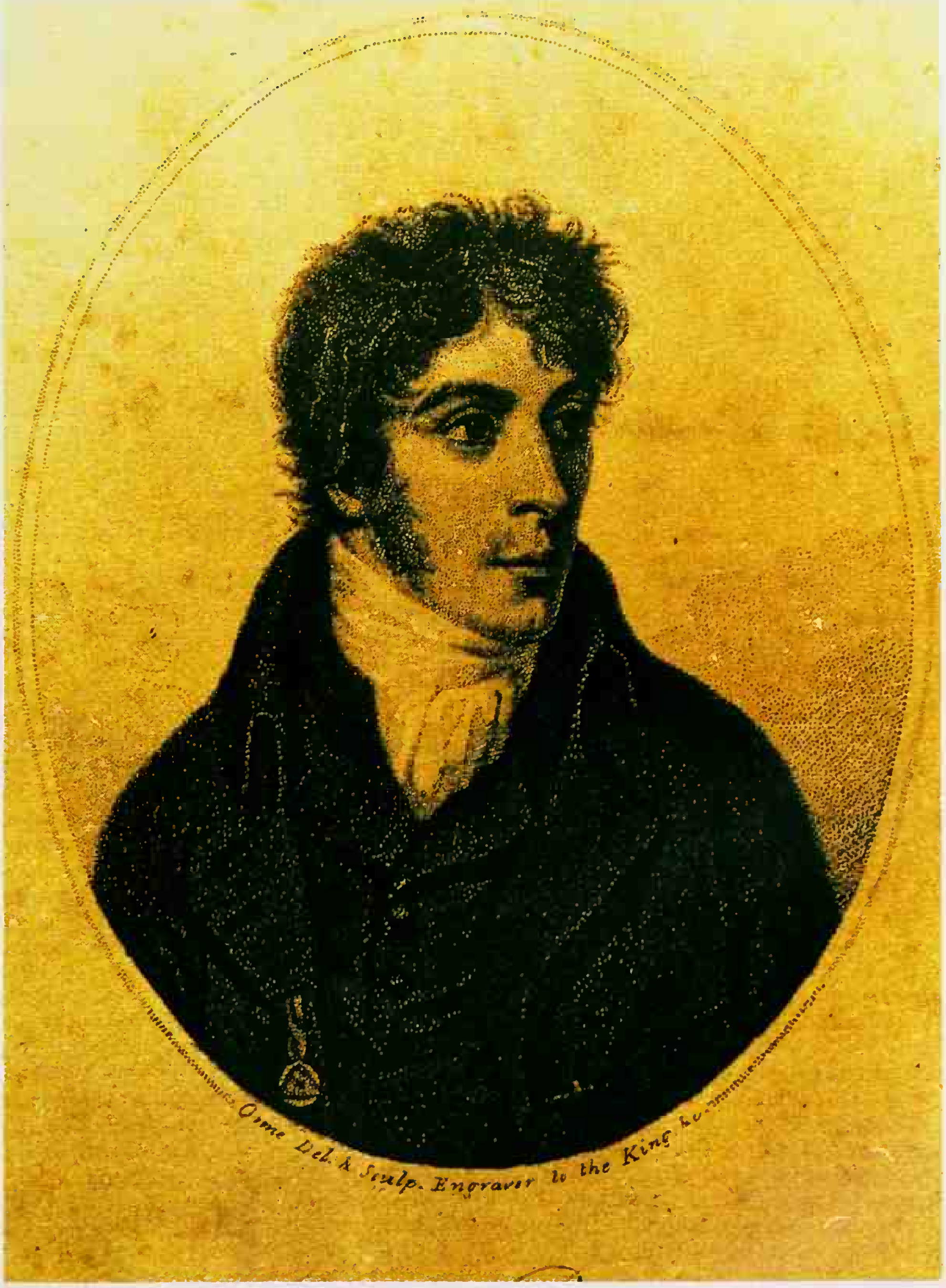
FRANCIS BARRETT is best known as the supposed author of *The Magus* (1801), an instructional 'Do It Yourself' work on ceremonial magic, crystal gazing, and other occult techniques which exerted a considerable influence on those active in the nineteenth century magical revival. Amongst these latter were a considerable number of obscure occultists employing very ancient methods of ceremonial crystal-gazing intended to bring them into contact with angels and, more importantly, a group of Masonically-inclined esotericists of whom the more notable included W. Wynn Westcott and S. L. MacGregor Mathers (see GOLDEN DAWN).

In reality Barrett was not the author of *The Magus* but only its compiler and editor, for most of its text was derived from 17th-century English translations of esoteric works originally written in Latin.

Thus Part I of Book II of *The Magus* seems to consist largely of a paraphrase of parts of John Heyden's *Harmony Of The World* (1662) while Part II Book II, which Barrett entitled 'The Perfection And Key Of The Cabala Or Ceremonial Magic' and presented as though it were a composition of his own, was no more than a slightly modified and modernized version of the English translation of Cornelius Agrippa's *Fourth Book Of Occult Philosophy* which had been made by Robert Turner and published by a London bookseller in 1655.

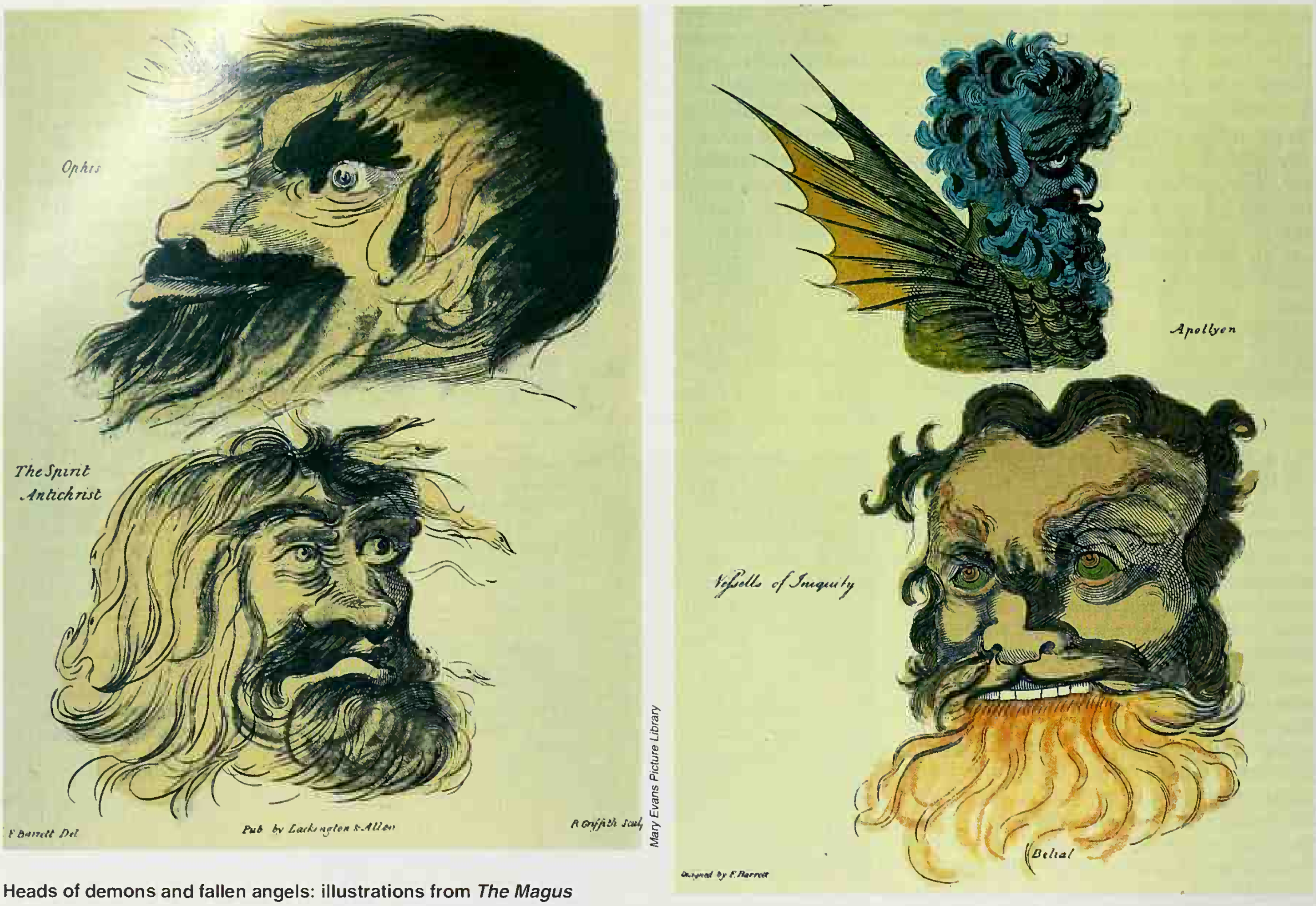
Barrett took slightly more trouble with Book II Part III of *The Magus*, which is a translation of the *Heptameron* (also known as *The Magical Elements*) attributed to Peter de Abano (c1250-c1317). Here Barrett also used a 17th-century translation, again by Robert Turner, but at least translated most of the conjurations in it from the Latin in which Turner had left them.

It seems a virtual certainty that Barrett personally owned neither printed nor manuscript versions of most of the treatises from which he borrowed. For, according to a note made by the usually well informed crystal-gazer and collector of occult manuscripts Frederick Hockley (1808-1885), all of Barrett's source material was lent to him by the bookseller John Denley (1764-1842). Hockley wrote that all that is of real value in *The Magus* is: '...taken from C. Agrippa and the *Clavis* or Key to unlock the Mysteries of Rabbi Solomon, and an ancient work on Telesmata of great rarity which only exists in MS of which, however, there


Orme Del. & Sculp. Engraver to the King &c.

Images Colour Library

Francis Barrett, the otherwise obscure 19th century balloonist and supposed author of the occult compilation entitled *The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer*, which he published in 1801. Print based upon an engraving by Orme



Mary Evans Picture Library

Mary Evans Picture Library

Heads of demons and fallen angels: illustrations from *The Magus*

are a large number of copies extant. For compiling this book my late friend John Denley, the Occult Bookseller of Catherine St, lent Barrett the whole of the materials.'

There are certain puzzling features about Hockley's note. It is hard to understand, for example, how he could describe a work as being 'of great rarity' and then, in the same sentence, state that there 'are a large number of copies extant'. His statement that all that is of real value in the book is taken from Agrippa and the *Clavis* seems almost equally odd; presumably, for reasons of his own, Hockley had judged the magic of the *Heptameron* worthless.

The Francis Barrett who compiled *The Magus* can fairly certainly be identified with the man of the same name who was born, the son of quite humble parents of Welsh origin, on 18 December 1774 and baptized at St Mary's Church, Marylebone (then an outlying suburb of London) in January 1775.

While little or nothing is known with any certainty about Barrett's life prior to 1800, there is some evidence that he may have at one period worked for an apothecary and/or a surgeon and that he for a time followed an occupation connected with the sea.

That this latter was indeed the case is suggested by the fact that Barrett was a temporary resident of Barnstaple at the date of his marriage (20 January 1800) to a sixteen-year-old girl named Grace Hodge. For by that time Barnstaple was regaining some of its old importance as a Devonshire seaport, particularly as far as the coasting trade was concerned.

Barrett's stay in Barnstaple was of short duration; he returned with his wife to Marylebone, where their son, another Francis, was born in January 1801.

At this time the couple were living at an address in Prince's Street (now John Prince's Street), near Cavendish Square, from which Barrett would appear to have conducted some sort of occult school.

By the time *The Magus* was published this school was operating from 99 Norton Street, which is within almost a stone's throw of Catherine Street. Its students – and there is evidence that there were more than one of them – were assured that they would be initiated into 'the Rosicrucian discipline' together with 'the choicest operations of Natural Philosophy, Natural Magic, the Cabala, Chemistry, the Talismanic Art, Hermetic Philosophy, Astrology, Physiognomy etc, etc. Likewise they will acquire the knowledge of the Rites, Mysteries, Ceremonies, and Principles of the ancient Philosophers, Magi, Cabalists, Adepts etc.'

Barrett's esoteric school does not seem to have survived long although, according to the late Montague Summers, one of its students was 'a Cambridge [University] man' who 'initiated others, and until quite recent years – it perhaps persists even today – the Barrett tradition was maintained at Cambridge, but very privately...'.

Summers's assertion cannot be completely discounted – he had been in much company that might better have been avoided and had acquired a considerable knowledge of underground occult traditions – but whether or no Barrett had disciples at Cambridge he seems to have had at least one student at Oxford.

A surviving early 19th-century occult manuscript largely written in various of the magical alphabets contained in *The Magus* has an Oxford provenance. Inside its front cover is the bookplate of Henry Mansel (1820-71), an Oxford don with a strong interest in gnosticism who eventually became Dean of St Paul's.

The Magus was not a financial success in its author's lifetime, and by the summer of 1802 the main focus of Barrett's activities would seem to have become centred on ballooning – a dangerous sport which enthralled more than one 19th-century student of ritual magic and alchemy.

He made unsuccessful attempts at ascents from both Greenwich and Swansea, and finally managed to get some six feet off the ground. His balloon, however, quickly became entangled in a hedge, he stepped out of its basket, and it shot some hundreds of feet into the air and was blown towards North Wales.

After this fiasco Barrett vanished from sight and, although there were later vague reports that he had emigrated to the United States, nothing is known of his subsequent career, even the date of his death being unknown. His influence, however, has been an abiding one. FRANCIS KING

In the 16th century Basque witchcraft was believed to be a Satanic cult, but behind it was an older type of witchcraft, belief in which has persisted to the present day

BASQUE WITCHCRAFT

DURING THE LATER 15th century, the whole of the 16th and the early years of the 17th, the witches and wizards of the Basque region were intensely active and acquired a reputation which spread all through Europe. The Basques are a people of mysterious origin, living along the coasts of northern Spain and southern France, under the shadows of the Pyrenees. As early as the 3rd century BC they were famous for their skill in predicting the future from the flight of birds. Later, their conversion to Christianity was a slow process and forms of worship which are non-Catholic and not centred on the Church have continued to appear right up to the present time.

A Spanish royal edict of 1466 indicates that in the province of Guipuzcoa, on the southern shore of the Bay of Biscay, there were a number of men and women who practised witchcraft and black magic. They were known as *bruxos* and *xorguinos*. The activities attributed to them included damaging property, causing harm to other men and women, inducing sterility and difficult childbirths, and causing bad vintages and bad harvests of other crops. The witches and wizards were also believed to deny God and the Virgin Mary. This was the period in which the Basque country was torn by warring nobles and factions. Armed men killed each other mercilessly, and blood relations disposed of each other by poisoning. In a social environment such as this, where friendship could turn to violent enmity, where blood relationships produced both strong alliances and great family dramas, it is understandable that the public authorities shrank from intervening in incidents attributed to supernatural forces.

The Lady of the Caves

The next pieces of evidence about the sect of the witches known to the great historians of the Inquisition and heresy in Spain also come from Vizcaya. They date from 1500, by which time the Spanish Inquisition had already been functioning for many years, and there are two of them: that of Archdeacon Pedro Fernandez de Villegas, in his commentary on Dante's *Inferno*, and that of Fray Francisco de Vargas. The archdeacon's text indicates that the centre for the witches' meetings or 'conciliabules' was in the mountain range of Amboto, a place which is famous in Basque folklore, as it is said to contain some caves in which lives a deity known as 'la Dama' (the lady), who was considered to be the patron of the witches.

Many people confessed to having spoken to the Devil, who sometimes appeared as a male goat and at other times as a handsome mule. But those who confessed to having seen this also admitted that he sometimes appeared as a man, though always bearing some sign which indicated his evil nature, for instance a horn in his forehead or long protuberant teeth.

This form of 'witches' sabbath' must be related to those which took place somewhat earlier in the south of France and the Catalan Pyrenees (to the east of the Basque region). The first appearance of the 'sabbath' in Inquisitorial trials was in Carcassonne and Toulouse between 1330 and 1340. In the Catalan valleys it is first recorded about 1424.

Judged by the Left Eye

The trial of 1500 was considerably influenced by what had been written about witchcraft in different parts of Europe throughout the 15th century. The most famous text was the *Malleus Maleficorum*, which had such a pernicious influence in Europe from its first appearance until well into the 17th century, although it is true that there were some inquisitors and theologians in Spain who followed certain earlier, far less credulous doctrines about the reality of the activities attributed to witches and wizards. Among these must be counted Martin of Arles, who disagreed with those who believed witches to be capable of flying through the air and performing other similar acts, although he did believe that it was possible, by means of spells, to cause sterility in married couples, injure people, destroy fields and crops, all through the help of the Devil. But in spite of these exceptions it seems that in 1507 the Inquisitor of Calahorra burned some 30 witches and a few years later the kingdom of Navarre experienced a wave of terror and repression.

In 1527 the Inquisition, established on the frontier of Navarre, carried out an intensive investigation into the activities of witches. Two girls, aged nine and 11, appeared before the court at Pamplona to denounce the abominable acts they had taken part in. They offered their help in the administration of justice if they were pardoned. Accepting this condition, the judge went from village to village accompanied by 50 soldiers. The two girls were put in separate houses and suspects were summoned before them in turn. The children looked the suspects in the left eye and decided whether or not they were witches. They were looking for a 'sign' in the eye, resembling a frog's foot. It appears that over 100 men and women were discovered to be sorcerers, having been judged so independently by both the children.

The Devil's Communion

According to documents discovered by the city clerk of Pamplona a similar investigation was carried out in 1525 with Graciana de Izaroz as the witness, in the region of Ituren and Zubieta. Four hundred people presented themselves voluntarily and only twelve were picked out as sorcerers: two men and ten women. These were subjected to a second inspection by the same Graciana (whose grandmother had been burnt as a witch) and she remained doubtful about two of them. Some of those convicted formed a family group (a married couple and an uncle); others, more sinister, were the classic solitary witch with a strong background of erotic activities, such as Maria of Ituren. The group of witches and wizards of Elgorriaga and Urroz were accused of making ointments with toads' blood and babies' hearts. Maria of Ituren was tortured and confessed to having celebrated a 'conventiculo' (clandestine gathering) with her companions. There they ate and drank until cock-crow. Having anointed themselves, they changed into horses and galloped through the air. The ointment they used was made from toads which had been skinned alive and pulverized, and a herb called in Basque *usainbelar* (water plantain).

While Maria of Ituren confessed to all these activities, others flatly denied everything, and when subjected to ducking said that they believed in God and were telling the truth when they pleaded innocence. The Inquisitor Avellaneda evolved a theory of witchcraft which coincides almost exactly with the theories of other judges and theologians engaged in similar activities in different parts of Spain. The letter in which he expounds this theory is a monument of credulity. The classic argument 'seeing is believing' is of little use to us in judging what he saw and believed, for in the letter already mentioned he claims to have seen a witch flying, before reliable witnesses: and a witch smeared with ointment being transported by the Devil, who was then frightened off by the name of Jesus.

According to Avellaneda, the witches first deny the Christian faith. Then new witches are presented to the Devil by an initiate, in a particular place on the day appointed for such gatherings. On this day (it is usually Friday night) there is a horrible banquet and a kind of communion. Then there are great sexual orgies, and on top of that, evil acts against the rest of society. The Devil appears in the form of a black male goat and is worshipped in an indecent manner. The bait offered is the promise of riches and pleasures. The gatherings were sometimes very large: at one, between Pamplona and Viana, there were nearly a thousand people.

The Horned Horse

The activities of Avellaneda must have caused a considerable disturbance amongst the high functionaries of the Inquisition, for in 1529 several of them met to discuss the question of whether witches flew or not and whether they went to their gatherings in reality or only in their imaginations. In fact six voted for their doing so in reality, three for their imagining it, and one remained doubtful. It can be said that opinions remained divided in similar proportions throughout the 16th century. The country suffered waves of terror and panic at the activities of witches and wizards. A succession of children and adolescents appeared, providing the most terrifying pieces of information and confessing themselves to be repentant sorcerers.

From 1530 to 1555 there was a veritable battle between those who called for heavy penalties against witches and wizards, and the Inquisition, which was disinclined to accept mass accusations. At times the civil authorities acted individually and on their own initiative, as happened in Vizcaya in the years 1555 and 1556, where proceedings were started against a family group of witches and wizards. The trial is significant because it indicates the existence of local rivalries, of disputes between families which may lie behind the accusations of witchcraft, and also in the importance given to the testimony of an eight-year-old girl, Catalina de Guesala, and of other minors.

The Crying Dog

They spoke of gatherings in houses, initiations, flight by means of ointments, worship of the Devil in specific places (in this case in Pretelanda) and the appearance of the Enemy in the form of a jet black horse with horns, seated on a chair. They described orgies of eating, drinking and unnatural sexual practices. The sorcerers of Vizcaya caused harm to men and crops and appeared in one case as suckers of blood. The civil judge, however, did no more than condemn the accused to torture by ducking and flogging.

In 1575, several functionaries of the Inquisition were active in the territories of La Burunda, Echarri-Aranaz and Huarte Araquil. In Ciordia there was an outcry against Gracia Martiiz of Urdiain, who was accused of having been seen near her house one night with ten or twelve other people, all dressed in white. On being seen, all except for Gracia flew off on a sheet which was also white. One man, aged 70, claimed to have seen all this when he was 30. Another accuser declared that one night he saw animals emerging from the house of the same Gracia: deer, dogs, male goats, galloping and making a great commotion. Also a dog came out of another old house crying, from which it was inferred that the other noisy animals were 'witches and malefactors'. The ageing Gracia was put in prison. She was over 80 and at one point it was decided to torture her. Several other women in the prison said she was no more than a skeleton. The Royal doctor of Navarre, Doctor Zalduendo, confirmed that if she was tortured she would die. Added to this was the testimony of two priests who proclaimed her Christian virtues. She was finally exiled from the kingdom.

In the valley of Araiz c1595 Maria Miguel de Orexa, 26 years old, submitted to a carefully prepared interrogation in which it came out that she had been initiated into the art of witchcraft at the age of 10 by her grandmother, who was on her deathbed (in accordance with a tradition preserved to this day, that witches cannot leave this world without transmitting their condition to someone else). The girl went to a sabbath, which she reached, after having been smeared with ointment, by flying through the air with three female companions. They met 15 others on the coast of Urrizola and from there flew to a large plain. In the middle of the plain were two seats which appeared to be of gold, with two black forms: one was a man with a head of a male goat, the other was his wife. In her confession, Maria Miguel identified them as Beelzebub and his spouse. The rest of her story tells us little which is new: dancing to the sound of tambourines and rebecks, worship of the Devil (in a nearby cave) and then an orgy till cock-crow.

Lives Dominated by Horror

According to the report of a trial in Logroño in 1610, the sect of witches and wizards had a very solid structure and a systematic organization. The art of witchcraft was handed down from one generation to another: It was not easy to join the sect. A master wizard sponsored a new convert and presented him on a night chosen for the occasion. Once the convert had abandoned Christianity and made his new profession of faith in the Devil, he was branded and sworn to secrecy. Then came indoctrination

The Basque regions of north-western Spain showing the kingdom of Navarre and neighbouring provinces, an area long renowned for its witches. From an early 17th century map

BISCAIA, GUIPISCOA, Navarra, et Asturia's de Santillana.
Leucæ Hiſpanicæ
SEPT. TENT.
MERIDIES
OCCIDENS
ORIENS
CANTABRICUS
OCEANUS
ASTURIAS
BISCAIA
GUIPISCOA
NAVARRA
GALLIÆ
ARAGONIÆ PARS
PARS
Bilbao
Pamplona
Vitoria
Logronno
Burgos
Leon
Valadolid
Tordezillas
Palentia
Medina de rio
Calatajut
Saragoza
Tudela
Soria
Numantia
S. Sebaſtian
Fuenterabia
Bajona
S. Jan de Lus
S. Andero
S. Vincente
Santillana
Aviles
Miranda
Tolosa
Roncevalles
Olite
Lerin
Jaca

The Devil's Priests

The priests and curés of Labourd and of the neighbouring districts of Navarre are for the most part sorcerers. They are so respected that no one is scandalized by their habits, frequenting the taverns, the dances, the ball games with swords by their side . . . or going on pilgrimages in company with three or four pretty girls. Their privileges are such that at first no one dared to accuse them, but Satan could not at last prevent an old priest of good family from being denounced. He confessed that some fifteen or sixteen years before he had wanted to quit this abomination, but the devil so tormented him that he was almost out of his senses . . . He was condemned to death . . . and he requested the Bishop of Dax to perform the degradation, after which he was duly executed...

This made a great sensation and there was no longer hesitation in accusing priests. Some of them feigned vows to Monserrat and other places and fled; others took to the sea. At first we looked on the accusations with suspicion as the result of enmities, but little innocent children and persons from other parishes bore testimony to seeing them in the Sabbat. We arrested seven of the most notable in the land, most of them having cure of souls in the best parishes of Labourd. One of them, Pierre Bocal of Siboro, aged twenty-seven, had celebrated the devil's mass in the Sabbat the night before he sang the first one in his church . . . For the service in the Sabbat the devil gave him 200 crowns, while that in his church brought him only about 100.

Pierre de Lancre *Tableau de l'Inconstance des Mauvais Anges* (1612)

under the tutelage of a master wizard, and an initiation ceremony.

The different grades formed by those attending a sabbath appear to have been as follows: 1, Children (who were under the guardianship of another member); 2, Initiates (also with their guardian); 3, Performers (without a guardian): makers of poisons and evil spells; 4, Masters: propagandists, initiators and tutors; 5, The leaders of the meetings or sabbaths: the King and Queen, the guardian of the children, and the executioner.

The organization was monarchic. The Devil appeared on his throne. At the sabbaths there were always banquets, dancing and sexual orgies. But all this was subject to the principle of inversion to such an extent that what should have appeared agreeable, from a sensual point of view, was in fact repugnant.

The practice of evil was an important feature of the lives of these witches and wizards: to carry out their evil deeds they had recourse to shape-changing and flying. They blasted crops, livestock and people: they practised necrophagy (the eating of dead bodies) and vampirism. Not even their own families were safe from them, for the members of the sect murdered their relations. In addition they celebrated black masses and committed all kinds of sacrilegious acts.

The Logroño trial paints a picture of lives dominated by horror. The sorcerers seem to live like condemned men. However great the fear inspired by the Devil in Spain in the 17th century, the accumulation of so much evil proved something of a strain on even the most serious and balanced minds. The report of the trial was read by the humanist Pedro de Valencia, who wrote two critical essays about it asking questions such as: Was all this true? Could these be orgiastic cults like those of classical times? Human excesses and strong passions could explain what was described to a certain extent, but was it not due rather to the effects of the imagination? Pedro de Valencia emphasizes the mental states which can be attained by the use of drugs, and also touches on the theme of a predilection for what is repellent, as described by some doctors. Where does the truth lie?

As a man well versed in the ways of the world, Pedro de Valencia considered that the meetings of witches must be real, 'that their chief object is that which has been pursued by all such people in all ages, namely carnal self-indulgence'. In other words, witches and wizards were dominated by sensual passions rather than by any religious or anti-religious beliefs and motives.

Deserted Sabbaths

According to the findings of Alonso de Salazar y Frias, one of the judges of the Logroño trial who became sceptical about the report some years later, 1384 children aged from six to 14 had made confessions which were full of defects. There was no consistency of opinion as to where the sabbaths took place, nor on the question of the ointments used. Some of the sorcerers 'pottages' as the Inquisitor disdainfully refers to them, were tried out on animals and found to have no effect. He also proved to the witnesses and the sorcerers themselves that the things which they described had not in fact happened. He even sent two secretaries to one notorious sabbath on the appointed day and they found no proof that anything happened there.

Everything which the Logroño report had held to be true was exposed as a series of hoaxes and fairy tales. The Inquisitor saw the results of the previous trials as being due to the ignorance and malicious intent of witnesses, the mentally confused state of the accused and the incomprehension or laziness of the judges. He himself confesses to having put pressure on some of the accused, and of not having punished two witnesses who were responsible for the majority of the denunciations and who afterwards boasted of having told lies.

The Church of Satan

The French Basque coast was, like the adjoining territories, a prey to fear of the activities of witches and wizards; and in Navarre, Guipuzcoa and Vizcaya the French Basques were believed to be even more notorious sorcerers than the Spanish. There was a succession of trials there between 1576 and 1605.

In 1609 came an explosion of panic on the French Basque coast which is not easily explained. The people of Labourd, as those of Guipuzcoa before them, demanded the punishment of the sorcerers, who were becoming a veritable plague. King Henry IV of France commissioned the president of the parlement of Bordeaux and two councillors to take action. One of them, a lawyer named Pierre de Lancre, worked with terrifying zeal. He was prejudiced from the start against the Basques. Besides being a hostile observer, he had at his fingertips the books of former well-known judges of witches and the harsh laws which had been applied elsewhere in Europe in the past. Thus equipped, and with a total ignorance of the language, he succeeded in reducing the region to a state of terror worse than any previously recorded.

Here again there were hysterical declarations by crowds of children. The image of witchcraft which de Lancre held is similar to, but more complex and lurid than, that given by the report of Logroño. The number of sabbaths grew, and the abundance of demons was matched by the number of different forms they took. Besides describing a secret society organized on monarchical lines, with a court of the French type having its grades and hierarchies, de Lancre imposes a whole ecclesiastical system on the sorcerers' society, so that the sabbath appears as an imitation of the Catholic faith, with temples, altars, diabolical saints, music and decorations. There were also, according to him, ecclesiastical grades among the sorcerers, from subdeacons to bishops.

Basque Witch Beliefs Today

Even today in one or two rural communities, one can find a wealth of traditions about the activities of witches and wizards.

Little is said in these traditions of sabbaths or diabolical gatherings, though in Vizcaya the witches are said to meet in a so-called partridge field and in caves. Here and there caves, springs, dolmens and other specific places are considered to be the haunts of witches.

But as significant as this, or more so, is the fact that in Vizcaya and Guipuzcoa a belief has existed right up to the present time in a goddess who is supposed to live in the mountains. She has a woman's face of extraordinary beauty. She sometimes flies through the air surrounded by fire and is the president and directress of the witches. This deity is called 'la Dama' or 'la Senora' (the lady). This name, as in la Dama de Emboto, is sometimes followed by the name of the place where she resides in a cave filled with gold and illusory precious objects which are transformed into coal when exposed to daylight. Thus beliefs current before the 14th century are closer to the present day than those of the 16th or 17th centuries.

J.C.BAROJA

FURTHER READING: J. C. Baroja, *The World of Witches* (Weidenfeld, 1964).

BAT

THE BAT IS an animal with leather-like wings and hideous appearance, a creature of the shadows. One species, the vampire bat, is a notorious drinker of blood. The bat's physical characteristics and its apparently supernatural ability to hunt its prey in total darkness have been largely responsible for the frightening reputation it has acquired over the ages as a creature of occult power.

The bat has taken on some of the significance of both the bird (symbol of the soul) and the demon (dweller in darkness), and has been represented in folklore as witch and familiar, ghost and devil, and occasionally as a tribal god.

Shakespeare refers to the bat as an ingredient in the hell-brew of the weird sisters in *Macbeth*.

> Eye of newt and toe of frog,
> Wool of bat and tongue of dog.

The Chinese, taking a kindlier view of the creature, maintain that the bat flies head downwards because of the weight of its brains. Aesop ascribed its night-flying habits to attempts at evading its creditors. But in most parts of the world the bat is a mysterious and terrifying creature of the night, a death symbol to the Irish, a ghost to the Indians of British Columbia, and an embodiment of the dead among Ivory Coast Negroes. In Europe, Asia and America the sudden entry of a bat into a house foreshadows the death of the occupant. In China, however, the bat symbolizes a long and successful life.

It was an established principle in medieval times that the Devil often assumed the shape of a bat, and because of this Sicilian peasants, even today, burn bats alive or nail them with wings outstretched to their doors.

Macabre Burdens

Evil spirits in the shape of bats were believed to enter the bodies of human beings, from which they could only be evicted by skilled exorcists. Nigerian witch-doctors, who are particularly adept at this art, skilfully extract bats and frogs from the mouths of patients who happen to be afflicted in this particular way. Among the Negroes of the southern

S. C. Bisserot

The bat, a creature of the dark which has long been associated with the Devil, stands for a form of fluttering horror which even today is hard to rationalize away

states of the U.S.A. evil spirits are conjured out of human beings into the bodies of bats, which then obligingly flit away into the darkness with their macabre burdens.

In the *Remaines of Denis Granville*, published by the Surtees Society, there is an anecdote describing how a Frenchman, suffering from melancholia, was attended by a physician, a surgeon and a priest who brought with them a bat in a bag. While the priest prayed, the surgeon made a small incision in the sick man's side, and at the same time the physician suddenly released the bat, which began to flutter about the room. Convinced that the evil spirit had now left his body, the patient made an instant recovery.

La Voisin, the abortioner and sorceress of 17th century France, made use of bats' blood in the Black Mass. Something often found in gruesome rites of this nature was the body of a bat that had been drowned in blood, since this served as an agent for the release of psychic energy. And bats' blood was often an ingredient of witches' flying ointment, because it was supposed to give them the bat's ability to fly successfully at night.

Because it was magically powerful itself, the bat often served as a protective charm or amulet against the powers of evil, and as a luck-bringer. Among the Hessians in Germany it was an accepted belief that the heart of a bat attached to a gambler's arm by a red thread guaranteed him success at cards. In the Austrian Tyrol the fortunate possessor of a bat's left eye could make himself completely invisible to others at will.

A Few Drops of Blood

The bat became not only the totem animal of the men of an aboriginal tribe in New South Wales but also their sex symbol. A similar association of ideas led amorous Central European girls to entice their reluctant lovers into their arms by the discreet addition of a few drops of bats' blood to the loved one's beer.

Bats have occasionally been honoured

with the status of gods, the supreme deity of some of the Indians of the American Pacific coast being Chamalkan the bat. The mighty bat gods of Samoa invariably took the lead whenever the tribes marched off to war. In Europe, according to an old legend, a bat decided to join the war between the animals and birds but being uncertain as to where its real interest lay, fought on both sides.

In the legends of a number of North American Indian tribes the bat is given the unexpected role of hero and chivalrous champion of mankind in distress. This happier and positively virtuous aspect of the bat's character is seen in the modern American cult-figure, Batman.

Voodoo Drugs

In the folklore of the countryside, bats flitting about the fields at dusk indicate fine weather. Bats were long held responsible for stealing bacon from farm-house chimneys, and this curious bacon theme recurs in the custom, not yet quite extinct in the English countryside, in which boys, upon sighting a bat, chant:

> Bat, bat, get under my hat
> And I'll give you a slice of bacon.

Women, on the other hand, have always been extremely reluctant to let bats approach their heads, due to the superstition that bats are irresistibly attracted to the hair. Once entangled they can only be released by a pair of scissors wielded by a man.

The study of electronics has shown tha the mysterious ability of the bat to find it way in complete darkness without hittin any obstacles is due to a supersonic detection device not unlike radar. Nevertheless despite every scientific effort to rationaliz the bat, its image as a symbol of the Devi remains unshaken.

The traditional function of the bat i contemporary magic has been furthe emphasized by the edict of the New Yorl City Council of 1962 outlawing the sale o Voodoo drugs. Bats' blood was included i the list of prohibited items, with praye candles inscribed 'death unto my enemy' lovers' oil and grave dust.

Spells and counter-spells filled the air between Paris and Lyons in this extraordinary occult contest between rival groups of magicians

BATTLE OF BEWITCHMENT

ONE OF THE ODDEST EPISODES in the history of modern magic, a prolonged battle of spells conducted in space over a distance of 300 miles, occurred in France towards the end of the 19th century.

On one side, in the city of Lyons, was a defrocked priest named Joseph-Antoine Boullan, who in 1875, at the age of 51, had become a disciple of the miracle-worker Pierre Vintras. At the end of that year, on Vintras's death, Boullan announced that he had been chosen to succeed him as high priest of the Church of the Carmel, which Vintras had founded. Most of the pontiffs consecrated by Vintras refused to accept the newcomer as their leader, and Boullan was left to settle with the few remaining members of the Carmel in Lyons. Here he ostensibly continued the work of Vintras, supported by his middle-aged housekeeper, Julie Thibault, otherwise known as Priestess of the Carmel and the Apostolic Woman.

Visitors to the Carmel were allowed to see Boullan and his priestess celebrating such curious rites as the Sacrifice of Glory of Melchizedek or the Provictimal Sacrifice of Mary, but only a favoured few were privilege to participate in the central acts of Boullan' mystico-erotic liturgy, his 'Unions of Life'.

Idol of the Mystical Sodom

Boullan taught that 'since the Fall of ou first parents (Adam and Eve) was the resul of an act of culpable love, it was through act of love accomplished in a religious spirit tha the Redemption of Humanity could an should be achieved.' Life, he maintained was a ladder which one could climb by havin sexual intercourse with celestial beings, an which one could help inferior creatures t climb by coupling with them. This doctrin can only be understood as advocatin incubism and succubism (sexual intercours with spirits in male or female form) on th

Photo Lanc

Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

Left **Abbé Boullan, the defrocked priest who believed that ritual magicians were attacking him** ***Above*** **The novelist J.-K. Huysmans, who became involved in the battle** ***Right*** **Julie Thibault, Boullan's 'Apostolic Woman'**

ne hand, and bestiality on the other. While here is no evidence that Boullan and his isciples ever committed bestiality, docuients exist which prove that they believed hey had copulated with archangels, saints, nd historical figures such as Cleopatra and lexander the Great.

Ranged against Boullan, 300 miles away n Paris, were four men: Edouard Dubus, a oung poet addicted to magic and morphine; ne Marquis Stanislas de Guaita, another norphinomaniac who had recently revived he ancient Rosicrucian Order; a young ccultist called Oswald Wirth; and one of uaita's fellow Rosicrucians, the self-styled âr Joséphin Péladan, a talented novelist nd picturesque charlatan who used to walk he boulevards of Paris in a silver waistcoat nd black Arab burnous.

The most dangerous of these four were uaita and Wirth, who had both learnt the ecrets of the Lyons Church of the Carmel by osing as would-be disciples. Early in 1887 uaita and Wirth joined together to set up hat they called an 'initiatory tribunal' to y Boullan, who was not surprisingly found uilty. On 24 May 1887, in a letter dictated y Guaita and signed by Wirth, the ex-Abbé as informed that he was a condemned man. Virth later maintained that all they had ntended to do was expose him, which they id in 1891 in the book *Le Temple de Satan*, here he was described as 'a pontiff of nfamy, a base idol of the mystical Sodom, magician of the worst type, a wretched riminal, an evil sorcerer, and the founder f an infamous sect.'

But Boullan was convinced that he had een condemned to death, and remember- ng the lethal spells and incantations he had aught Guaita and Wirth when they had een his guests in Lyons, he not unnaturally ssumed that they would try to carry out the entence by magic. The house in Lyons was ccordingly put on a war footing, and soon, we are to believe Boullan and Julie hibault, an occult battle was raging, with ells and counterspells hurtling through ace between Paris and Lyons.

tudy in Satanism

his astonishing battle was still in progress t the beginning of 1890 when one of our rincipal witnesses to the whole episode, the ovelist J.-K. Huysmans, came on the scene. oris-Karl Huysmans had made his name as naturalistic writer but now, impelled by growing interest in the supernatural, he as planning to write a novel about Satanism.

The sinister rumours circulating in Paris bout Boullan suggested that the ex-Abbé, if ot a Satanist himself, would be able to pro- ide Huysmans with information about ontemporary Devil-worship. The novelist ccordingly wrote to him asking for 'reliable ocuments' and offering to depict him as he Superman, the Satanist, the only one n existence, far removed from the infantile piritualism of the occultists.' Boullan eplied politely but guardedly, refusing Huysmans' offer of publicity, denying that e was a Satanist, and posing as 'an Adept who has declared war on all demoniacal ults'; his letter was signed 'Dr Johannès' – he 'Adept's name' under which Huysmans was to portray him in his novel *Là-Bas*.

In a further letter Boullan offered to place at Huysmans' disposal 'documents which will enable you to prove that Satanism is active in our time, and in what form and what circumstances.' However, he was not prepared to give the novelist any information of value until he had satisfied himself that Huysmans was more trustworthy than Guaita and Wirth, and during the spring of 1890 he sent Julie Thibault to Paris to interview him. Huysmans was fascinated by this astonishing woman. She for her part took an immediate liking to the author. After she had reported favourably on her visit to Paris, Huysmans' flat was engulfed in a flood of documents from Lyons, with the result that his novel was finished by October 1890 and published the following spring.

Boullan had every reason to be pleased with the portrait Huysmans painted of him in *Là-Bas*, where he was presented as 'a highly intelligent and very learned priest . . . a much sought-after theologian and a recognized master of canon law.' The Rosicrucians on the other hand, were understandably angry at the attacks made upon them in the book, and Péladan, referred to in *Là-Bas* as 'that cheapjack magician, that mountebank from the Midi', retaliated by asserting that Huysmans' novel revealed 'an absolute and definitive ignorance of the laws of Satanism'. In fact, Huysmans' information was not so much inaccurate as misapplied, for the source from which he had drawn most of it was polluted. Boullan deceived Huysmans in much the same way as he himself had been deceived by Wirth.

Fluidic Fisticuffs

In spite of this deception, Boullan genuinely believed that Huysmans had become involved in his own occult battle with the Rosicrucians, and twice during the summer of 1890 he performed what he called 'magical operations' to protect the novelist from spells cast by Guaita and Péladan, the second of these 'operations' lasting two whole days. During a visit Huysmans paid to Lyons in October, he was instructed in the art of combating evil spells, and Boullan later sent him the weapons he would need in his battle with the occultists, notably an exorcistic paste made of myrrh, incense, camphor and cloves.

About this time the novelist began to be troubled by what he called 'fluidic fisticuffs', blasts of cold air which struck at his face at night, and which affected his cat at the same time. At the first sign of one of these attacks which, he told a doctor friend, he 'undoubtedly owed to the hatred of Stanislas de Guaita', he would promptly shut himself up with Boullan's occult weapons. A tablet of exorcistic paste would be burnt in the fireplace, a defensive circle drawn on the floor. And then, so an authority tells us, 'brandishing the miraculous host in his right hand, and with his left hand pressing the blessed scapular (cloak) of the Elijan Carmel to his body, he would recite conjurations which dissolved the astral fluids, and paralysed the power of the sorcerers.'

During the summer of 1891 Huysmans spent several weeks in Lyons, where Boullan performed even more elaborate ceremonies to defend the novelist and himself. Warned of impending danger by his astrological computations or by 'Maman' Thibault's interpretation of the flight of the local sparrow-hawks, the ex-Abbé several times celebrated the Sacrifice of Glory of Melchizedek, clad in the vestments of the Vintrasian Carmel: a red robe with a white mantle cut in the shape of an inverted cross, to signify that the reign of the dolorous Christ was over. Standing barefoot at the altar, he would recite the prayers of the Sacrifice, and placing his left hand on Huysmans' head and lifting up a host in his right, call upon the heavenly powers to strike down the spell-workers.

Writing to a friend with a levity which concealed childlike credulity, Huysmans reported: 'The battles have begun again since I last wrote to you – Wagrams in space . . . Boullan jumps about like a tiger-cat, clutching one of his hosts. He invokes the aid of St Michael and the eternal justiciaries of eternal justice; then, standing at his altar, he cries out: "Strike down Péladan, strike down Péladan, strike down Péladan!" And Maman Thibault, her hands folded on her belly, announces: "It is done."'

Death and a Duel

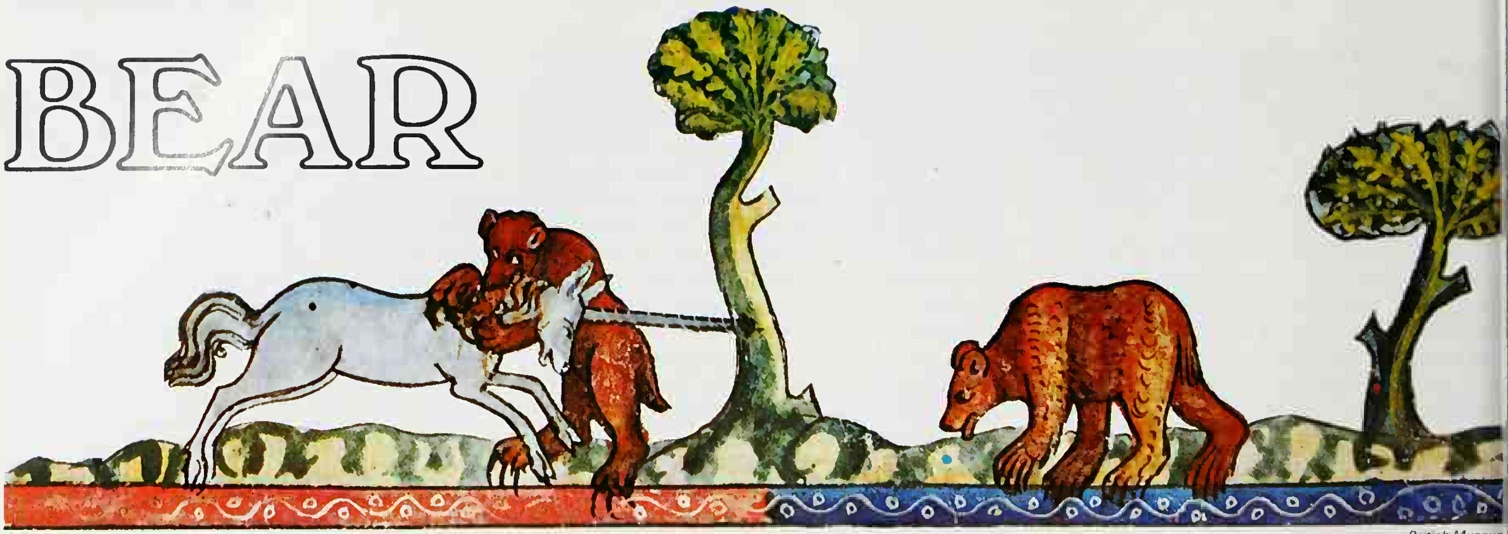
On 3 January 1893, the day after writing Huysmans a letter full of foreboding, reporting dreams of death which had haunted Julie Thibault, Boullan died suddenly. Huysmans' friend Jules Bois, a former disciple of 'Dr Johannès', promptly published an article in a Parisian newspaper accusing Guaita of having killed Boullan by magic. Huysmans himself declared in an interview: 'It is indisputable that Guaita and Péladan practise black magic every day. Poor Boullan was engaged in perpetual conflict with the evil spirits they continually sent him from Paris . . . It is quite possible that my poor friend Boullan has succumbed to a supremely powerful spell.' Guaita's response was to challenge both Huysmans and Bois to a duel, and although both quarrels were settled peacefully, a pistol duel was later fought between Bois and Guaita.

An account of the affair published by Bois tells of a horse mysteriously halted on the way to the duelling-ground and a bullet magically prevented from leaving a pistol-barrel, and there can be no doubt that both Huysmans and Bois continued to believe that Guaita and his fellow Rosicrucians had done Boullan to death by magic. Writing to tell Julie Thibault in August 1893 that Édouard Dubus had been committed to an asylum, Huysmans reported that 'before he was shut up at Charenton he was boasting it was he who had struck down the Father in Lyons. If he wasn't lying he's paid the penalty soon enough. As for Guaita . . . his punishment seems slow to come, but doubtless we shall see it in time.' It came five years later, when Guaita died of an overdose of drugs, at the age of 27.

ROBERT BALDICK

FURTHER READING: J.-K. Huysmans, *Down There (Là-Bas)* (Dover, 1972); R. Baldick, *The Life of J.-K. Huysmans* (Oxford University Press, 1955).

BEAR



British Museun

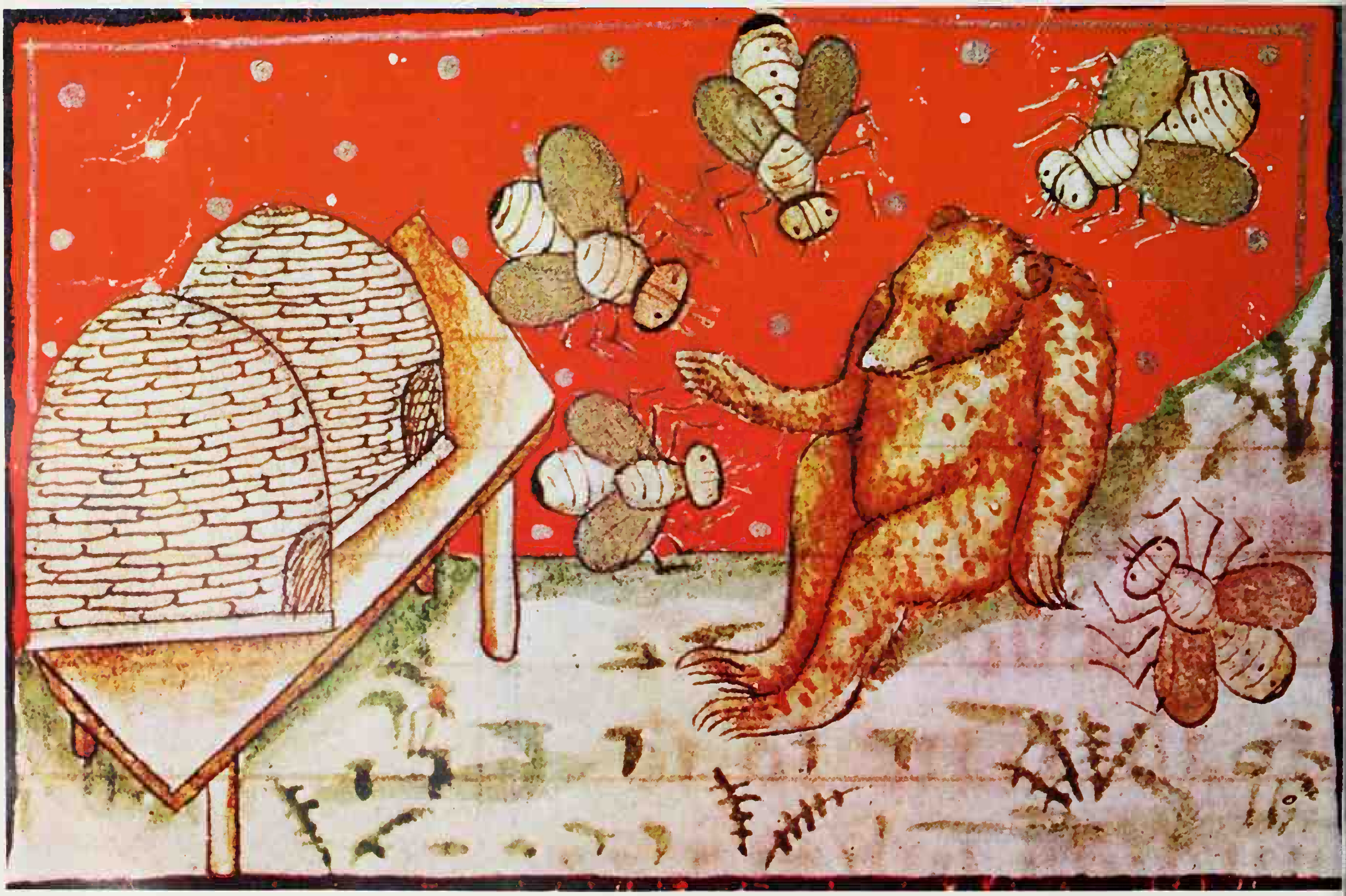
Bears were probably worshipped by Neanderthal man and, to this day, bear festivals are celebrated in parts of Europe

HUMAN VIEWS of the bear have always been awash with misconceptions, even in areas where bears were common. Paramount among the fallacies is the idea that bear cubs are born as shapeless lumps of flesh, and that the mother bear actually moulds them into shape by licking them. This belief was held by most ancient writers and was widespread in medieval Europe. The painter Titian used as his personal signature a picture of a she-bear shaping her young. Shakespeare compares a man's lack of character to 'an unlick'd bear-whelp that carries no impression like the dam.'

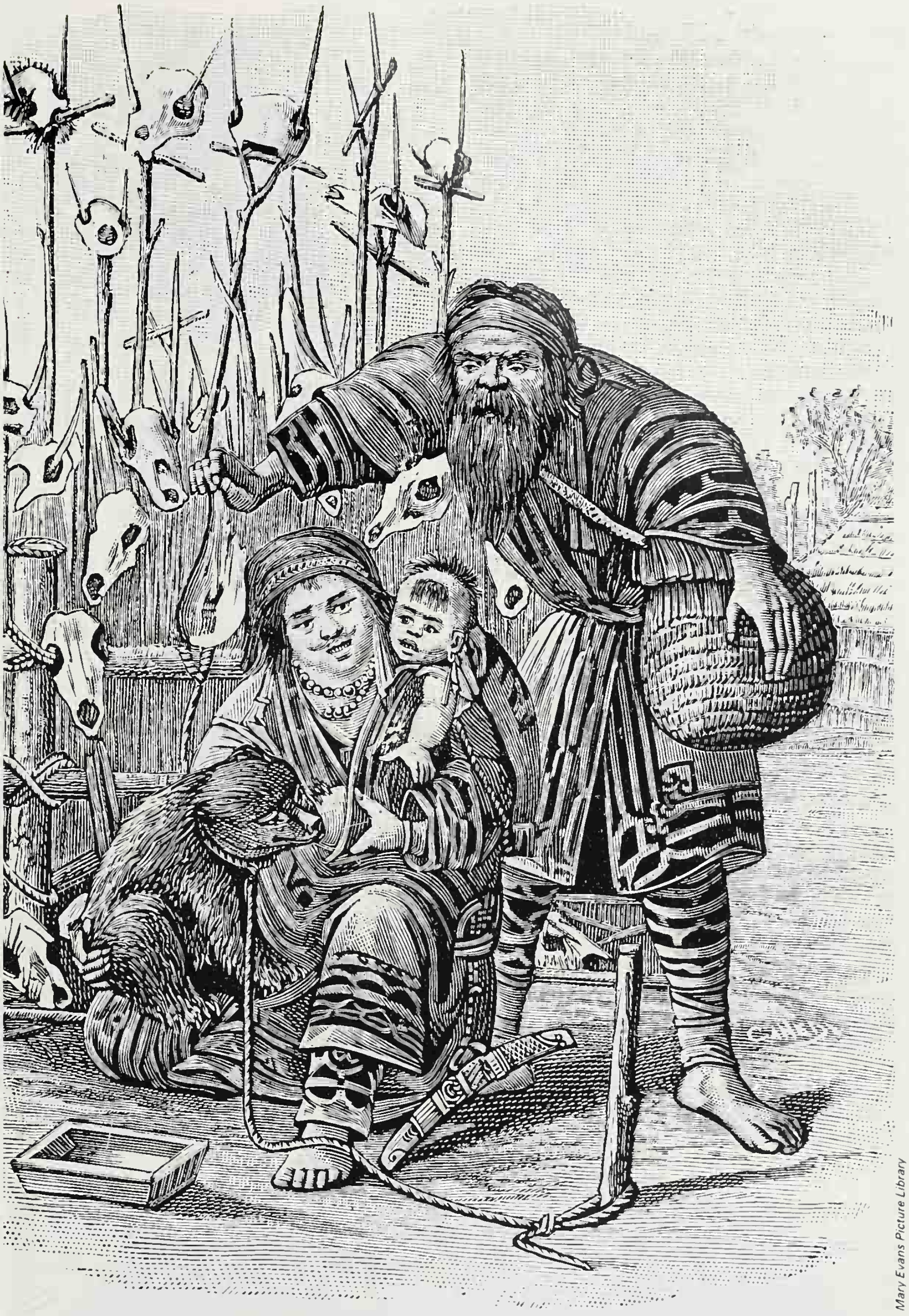
The belief still exists in many rural areas of Europe and America. It is understandable because bear cubs are ridiculously tiny at birth, and mother bears (like most animal mothers) do lick their young. So an observer, standing at a safe distance from the shebear, would see a tiny lump of flesh, half-buried in maternal fur, being licked. The fallacy has given the language the useful metaphor 'licked into shape'. There are plenty of other homely superstitions about bears. In the 16th century bear grease was a cure for baldness, and a preventative against blight in your garden, if you rubbed it on the garden tools. Englishmen then also believed that one ride on a bear's back would immunize a child against whooping cough. And an old cure for fits involved taking fur from a live bear's belly boiling it in *aqua vitae* (alcohol) and applying it to the soles of the feet.

In more recent belief, current still in parts of rural America, a bear's tooth was used as a teething implement for babies, to give their teeth the strength of the bear, and sometimes as an adult's charm against toothache. Bear grease may still be used to cure aches and pains (and in fact the massage will do some good), while sleeping on a bearskin has been said to cure backache.

Above **Battle of the bear and the unicorn; from a 14th century MS in the British Museum**
Below **Enemy of the bees, because he steals their honey, the bear has often been called 'Bee-wolf'**



t may seem odd that such a large and potentially fierce animal as the bear should be generally loved as the cuddly Teddy Bear. Desmond Morris, the British zoologist, suggests hat this affection is due to the bear's round. plump, furry appearance and its ability to stand on two legs like a human being. *Right* Among he bear-worshipping Ainu of Japan bear cubs were reared at a woman's breast until the time ame to send them away to the spirit home in a itual strangling ceremony


Mary Evans Picture Library

Like other animals, bears figure in supernatural legends. Bear ghosts walk through ome tales of the American South, and Worcester Cathedral in Britain was apparently haunted regularly by a bear in the 17th century. But accounts of apparitional bears are not nearly so numerous as those of dogs, cats and horses. It is in the realm of mythology and ancient religion that the bear comes into his own.

Helpers and Healers

Naturally, bears are important in the myths of North American Indians. In a way the bear was the Indian's greatest competitor, or it is as omnivorous as man. So bears ate he salmon caught by Pacific Northwest ribes, the buffalo meat stored by Plains ribes, the maize grown by tribes in the outhwest—and, sometimes, members of he tribes. Indian myths and customs show a great respect for the creature.

Northern Indians killed bears for food but always apologized to the dead animal for he indignity, for it was thought to possess great supernatural powers, even to be a god disguised. So the bear's head and hide would be ceremonially laid out, and care would be taken with the bones (so that the bear would not be crippled in the spirit world). To some tribes, including branches of the Apache, bears were so powerful that hey were not only never killed but were literally untouchable, alive or dead. In Indian myths bears often function as 'tutelary figures' or spirit helpers of the heroes. Bear acts as a healer in the myths of such widely diverse tribes as the Sioux, the Chippewa and the Pueblos, and the shamans or medicine-men of these tribes often dress as bears to take on their healing powers. The Kootenay Indians in the Canadian Rockies believed in a group of bear gods who could be prayed to for help. The Plains Cree, Iroquois, Cherokee and others hold 'bear dances' in which they imitate bear movements and pray to the bear spirits. And Labrador Inuit believe a shaman is visited during his ecstatic initiation ceremony by the Great Spirit in the form of a polar bear.

The legend of the Bear Woman is fairly common among North American Indians, and among other primitives, too. Usually it involves a tribesman who marries a strange woman with special magical powers, and who finds that she is a bear able to take human form. Most of the tales end unhappily: the husband is perhaps unfaithful and the woman reverts to bearishness, kills him and wreaks havoc on the tribe. Or else (as in similar tales of men who marry mermaids, elves and other immortals) she tires of humanity and returns to the forest or the spirit world, leaving her mourning husband behind.

The Bear's Son

A related class of legends tells of an alliance between a woman and a male bear. In most cases the woman produces a son, who grows up to be a semi-divine hero with perhaps some vestige of bearishness (like the bear's ears in the Chinese version of the tale). Such tales can be found all through Europe, as in German and Croatian legend, as well as in Asian and North American Indian lore. And at least two of the world's great legendary heroes are connected with bears and closely resemble the Bear-Son heroic prototype.

The first of them is the English hero Beowulf. His name seems to mean bear – 'bee-wolf", translatable as 'honey-eater'. His name probably connects him with the older Bear-Son tales; and his exploits, including a descent to the underworld and his final battle with the dragon, run parallel to the basic pattern of the Bear-Son stories. (See BEOWULF)

The other legendary character with possible bear connections is the Greek hero Odysseus. Recent scholarly detective work has connected the Odysseus legend with the Bear-Son stories and also with ancient bear-worshipping cults. The Odyssey refers to the family of Odysseus as the 'house of Arceisios', which name is a variant of a Greek adjective meaning 'bearish' or 'ursine'. A very old Greek myth, credited by some authorities as belonging to the Odyssean canon, makes Arceisios the child of a union between a man and a shebear. And Arceisios was Odysseus' grandfather.

The Great Bear

Apparently the Bear Son legends and other myths involving the bear have their roots in the widespread ancient worship of the bear. The earliest religious expression that we know of in human history took the form of bear worship. Neanderthal men, some 100,000 years ago, carefully placed the skulls of bears on what seem to have been holy altars (see ALTAR). The skulls were those of giant cave bears which, though vegetarian, were fierce competitors for the Alpine caves where the skulls were found. They were fierce and imposing enough, it seems, to be elevated into gods by the men who killed them. And it is possible that the killing and the reverential disposing of the skull had in it elements of ritual sacrifice, the sacrifice not to the god but of the god, returning him to his spirit home.

The pattern recurs in later cults of the bear. The Greeks told of a bear-goddess named Callisto, who was transformed by Zeus into the constellation called the Great Bear. But behind this pretty story lay a darker fact: the cult of Zeus Lycaeus, which some authorities connect with werewolfism and others with bear worship, but which definitely involved human sacrifice. Lycaon himself, in legend, was the father of Callisto; and the cult grew out of his sacrifice of a boy (in most versions, his bearish grandson Arcas) to Zeus. Callisto herself came to be closely associated with the virginal goddess and huntress Artemis. There are accounts of a bear cult from Brauron in Attica that centred on the worship of Artemis in bear form. But here only traces of ritual sacrifice remain in the mock-sacrificial presentation of young girls, dressed bear-like in brown robes, as initiates. The Great Bear is a powerful god in the mythologies of a group of peoples including the Lithuanians, Lapps, Esthonians and Finns, and some nomadic tribes across the north of Russia. In these religions, as in those of some North American Indians, the shaman or priest identified himself with the bear god.

Axel Pognant

Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle

Above **Wood carving of bear-man from Nootka Sound in Canada**
Below **Bear cameo from South Shields in England: possibly associated with a shrine of the Celtic bear god Matunus at Risingham in Northumberland**

The Hairy Ainu

Many of these shamanistic religions are still alive in odd corners of the world, still with their elements of bear worship, as among the Ainu of Japan. The Ainu are themselves something of a curiosity: they are not Japanese by race but have fair skins and blue eyes and are exceptionally hairy. It has been suggested that their culture is at least 10,000 years old. Their religion is dominated by a fire goddess and by the ritual worship of the bear.

In Ainu tradition, when a black bear cub was caught in the mountains, he was brought to the village with all the ceremony due to a visiting god. He was nursed at a woman's breast and when he grew larger he would be caged, but still tended with care until the time came to 'send him away' to his spirit home. The sending-away ceremony could be cruel, but ended quickly with a killing arrow and a ritual strangling. The dead bear's head and hide would then be arranged so that he could 'take part' in the feast held in his honour, a feast in which the main course was the bear's flesh.

Again, if the Ainu kill a wild bear, its body is brought into the village to be eaten but also to be worshipped during the eating, with offerings, songs and prayers. The sacrifice of the young bear has largely died out among modern Ainu, though the worship of the bear god still flourishes.

The Bear's Rebirth

We do not have to look entirely to obscure primitive religions for modern remnants of ancient bear worship. There are many survivals in western countries, such as the bear festival that has long formed a part of springtime celebrations in parts of southern France. In these rites a man dressed as a bear emerges from a symbolic cave, terrorizes the town and performs a mock abduction of a woman. Other communities in western Europe and in Slav countries have parallel ceremonies which include the enactment of a bear figure emerging from his winter's sleep.

Bear worship and the tales of bear heroes tend to have this common link: that the bear's 'dormancy', or hibernation, has a powerful and timeless symbolic meaning, closely connected to one of the most fundamental patterns of all mythology. The bear's emergence from his winter sleep is a symbolic rebirth, which parallels the death and resurrection of the hero-god in so many of the world's fertility religions. The bear's continuing presence in festivals of spring when crops are 'reborn', and in folklore and religious belief generally, testifies to the importance the animal has had through all the ages of mythology.

DOUGLAS HILL

FURTHER READING: Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (Viking Press, 1968); Rhys Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics* (University of California Press, 1974).

BEELZEBUB

A MONK OF THE abbey of Stablo in the Netherlands confessed in 1595, without undergoing torture, to being a witch. He said that the demonic being worshipped by witches at their sabbaths was Beelzebub. They kissed his footprints and before they began their feast said grace 'in the name of Beelzebub, our Grand Master, Sovereign Commander and Lord'. Two French witch hunters of the early 17th century, Pierre de Lancre and Henri Boguet, also said that witches blessed their food in Beelzebub's name, and Boguet added that they called im 'the creator and preserver of all things'; n other words, that they regarded him as heir god.

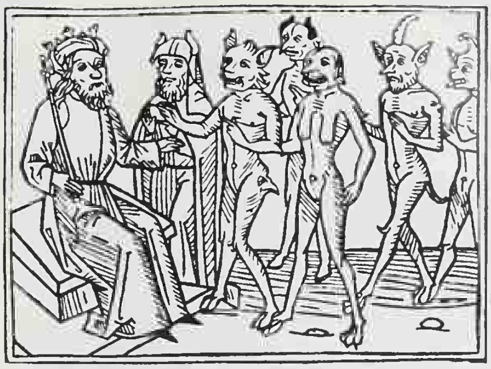
In the 16th century the demonologist John Wier, a pupil of Agrippa, gave Beelze- ub pride of place in a catalogue of demons s supreme chieftain of hell, with Satan anking below him. A book published in ermany in 1505, attributed to the cele- rated magician Faust, lists Beelzebub as ne of the five most powerful demons (the thers being Lucifer, Satan, Astaroth and eherit). One story was that it was Beelze- ub with whom Faust made his pact.

Two 18th century magical textbooks, the *rimorium Verum* and the *Grand Grimoire*, tate that the supreme trinity of evil con- ists of Lucifer, Beelzebub and Astaroth. When summoned by a magician, Beelzebub ppears in the form of a huge fly.

Conjuring up so fearsome a power is con- idered peculiarly dangerous. S. L. Mathers, magician who died in 1918 (see GOLDEN AWN), said that unless the magic circle is roperly drawn, to summon up Beelzebub would probably result in the death of the magician on the spot. This did not deter his upil Aleister Crowley from invoking Beelze- ub with 49 attendant demons and sending hem to attack Mathers. The reactions of Mathers are not recorded.

Beelzebub's reputation as a spirit of evil o powerful that he could be ranked with, r even take precedence of, Satan goes back t least to Jewish popular belief at the time f Christ, when he was regarded as the rince of devils. When Jesus expelled demons rom the bodies of the sick, he was accused f doing it with Beelzebub's assistance.

The demon was originally Baal-zebub, od of the Philistine city of Ekron, west of erusalem. Ahaziah, King of Israel in the th century BC, fell ill and sent messengers o the god asking whether he would recover 2 Kings, chapter 1). The name of the god eems to mean 'lord of flies', though it is not lear whether he ruled flies or drove them way; or possibly his priests took omens rom the flight of flies. But as flies were long elieved to be generated in mouldering orpses, the title Lord of the Flies was a uitable one for a great prince of demons, vhich are creatures of decay and corruption.



bove **Belial presents himself and four demon ompanions to Solomon and Moses** ***Right*** **The lemon of lies standing at the mouth of Hell, ere represented by the dragon's gaping jaws, rom the German** ***Book of Belial*****, 1463**

BELIAL

THE DEMON OF LIES, Belial or Beliar, plays a less prominent part in medieval and modern demonology than Beelzebub, though both were once great powers of evil in Jewish belief. This is probably because the main early references to Belial are in writings which were not included in the Bible.

The name may be a shortening of Hebrew *beli yaal*, 'without worth'. Depraved debauchees are sometimes called 'sons of Belial' in the Old Testament but in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, of the late centuries BC, Belial achieves much higher rank as chief of devils, prince of deceit, the malicious one, the tempter, the ruler of evil inclinations and master of hypocrites. In one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, *The War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness*, he is the leader of the forces of evil. 'But for corruption thou hast made Belial, an angel of hostility. All his dominion is in darkness, and his purpose is to bring about wickedness and guilt.' St Paul's second letter to the Corinthians (chapter 6) contrasts light with darkness, Christ with Belial. 'For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial?'

The *Sibylline Oracles*, a mixture of Jewish and early Christian propaganda, predicts that Belial will appear on earth. He will come from Samaritan stock, the Samaritans and the Jews being bitter enemies.

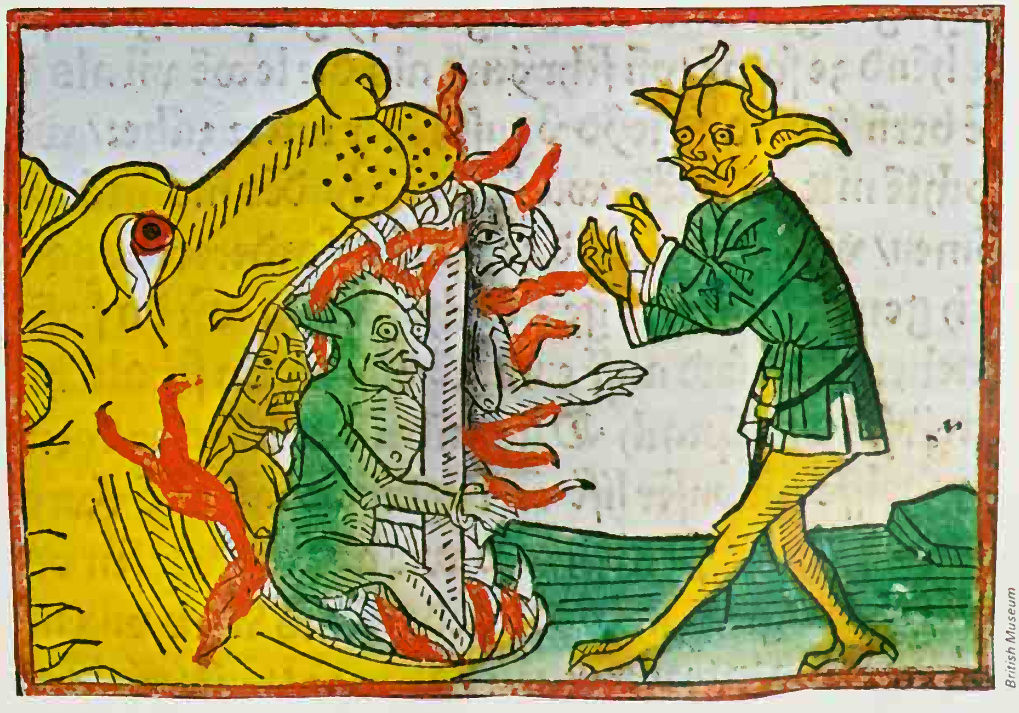
> . . . Beliar shall come in later time and shall raise the mountain heights and raise the sea, the great fiery sun and the bright moon, and he shall raise up the dead and shall perform many signs for men: but they shall not be effective in him. Nay, but he deceives and many shall he deceive.

This picture of a worker of deceptive wonders is probably connected with the belief in the Antichrist or Antimessiah, the incarnation of evil who will appear to counterfeit the miracles of the true Messiah and delude people into worshipping him.

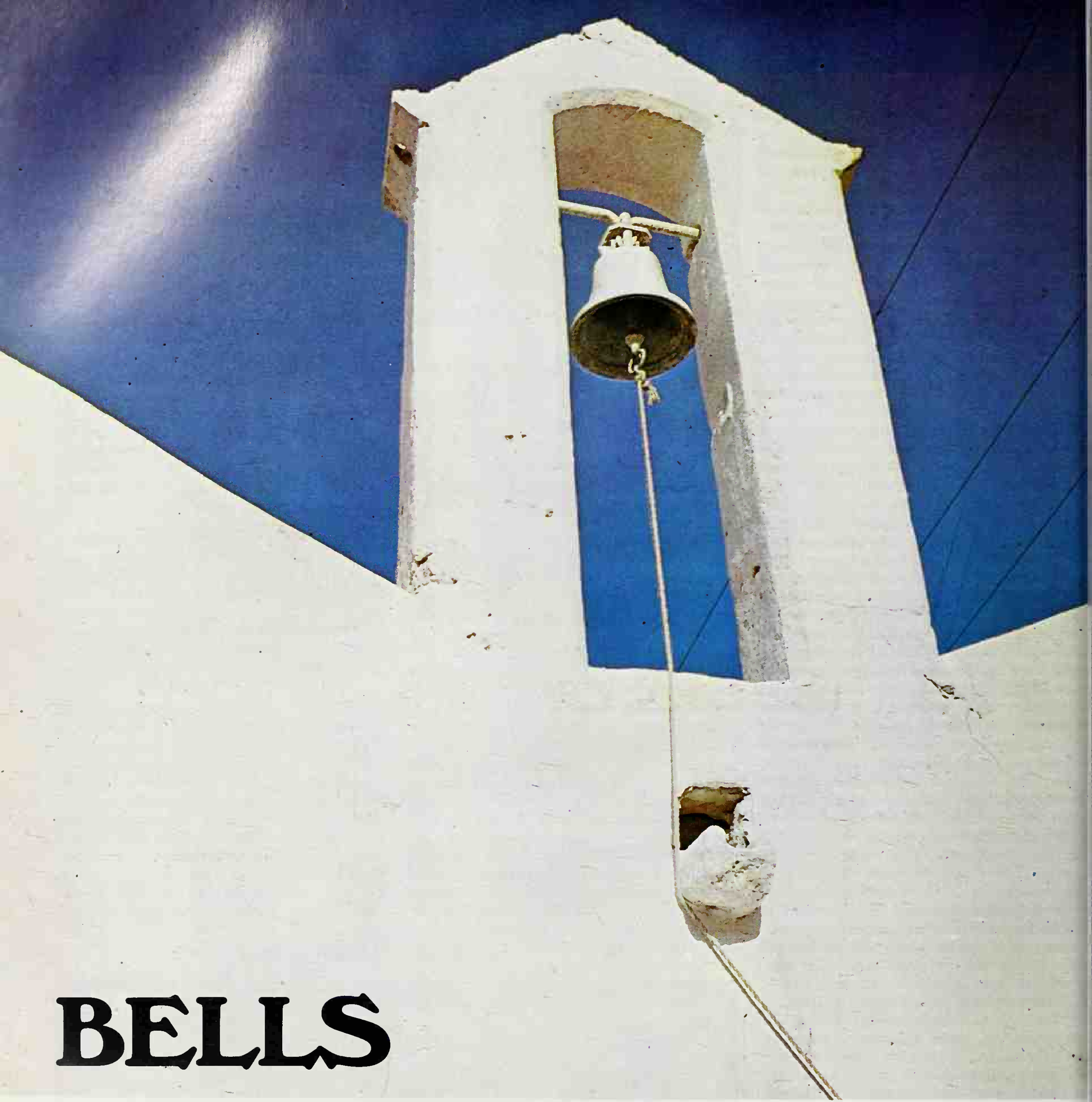
The emphasis on Belial's deceitfulness may have been influenced by the Zoroastrian belief in Ahriman, the principle of the Lie (see AHRIMAN), and in turn enabled Milton to picture him in *Paradise Lost* as a honey-tongued liar, the politician whose only principle is 'peace at any price':

> A fairer person lost not Heaven; he seemed
> For dignity composed and high exploit:
> But all was false and hollow; though his tongue
> Dropped manna, and could make the worse
> appear
> The better reason, to perplex and dash
> Maturest counsels: for his thoughts were low;
> To vice industrious, but to noble deeds
> Timorous and slothful.

Beelzebub and Belial were among the demons which the mass-murderer Gilles de Rais attempted to summon up (see GILLES DE RAIS). A cock, a dove, a pigeon or a turtle-dove had to be offered them to pacify them. The simple verbal formula for summoning them illustrates the belief of medieval magicians that God would help them to conjure up demons, however nefarious their motives for doing so. 'I conjure you Baron, Sathan, Belial, Belsebut, by the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, by the Virgin Mary and all the saints, to appear before us and to speak to us . . .'



British Museum



BELLS

C. M. Dixo

'And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.' The tolling bell is both a mark of death and a defence against evil

BELLS have been used for social, ritual and magical purposes from time immemorial. In the pagan temples of antiquity the bell's outer shell was regarded as female and the clapper, a later substitution for the hammer with which the bell was originally struck, as male. The use of bells in the rites of religion probably stems from their early role in magic. They were rung by the Chinese to summon rain and by the Tyrolese to protect the harvest. Even bells attached to domestic animals had the additional function of affording protection against evil spirits, as in modern Italy, where they are worn by horses and cattle as a defence against the Evil Eye.

The development of sophisticated religions failed to relegate these ancient symbols to the past. In the Old Testament, the robes of the High Priest were adorned with golden bells, and bells also played a significant role in the religions of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Hindus and Egyptians. The Christian Copts of Africa rang bells as a defence against the Evil One, and the old pagans of the North often inscribed bells with the hammer symbol of Thor, the thunder god.

The casting and particularly the consecration (making sacred) of church bells has always been accompanied by elaborate ceremonies. In Catholic Europe they were dedicated to the saints, without which rites, some believed, they could not sound or have the power to combat evil spirits. The baptism of a bell required the presence of a bishop or his deputy and the use of holy water, oil, salt and cream. The bell was washed, crossed, anointed and prayed for in the name of the Trinity, and presents were given to the priest on its behalf. In addition it was essential that it should have godfathers 'of high rank'.

The bell was taken to the church decked with flowers, a journey accompanied by much merry-making. The wild drinking for which the celebrations were notorious continued well into modern times, to the displeasure of the clergy. Church bells are often inscribed with a few words illustrative of their functions, such as the following:

When female virtue weds with manly grace
We ring with rapture and we spread it forth.

or more sombrely:

I call the quick to church
and dead to grave

The pre-Reformation pardon bell, sounded before and after the services, and the other special chimes, were intended primarily to scare away evil spirits and for this reason bell-ringing was inseparable from early religious processions. In times of plague, bells were rung to disperse the 'corrupt airs' that contemporary physicians considered to be a prime cause of pestilence.

Even in modern times some southern American mothers are convinced that a child can be cured of stuttering if it drinks from a bell, so acquiring the bell's ability to enunciate clearly. And in England it was commonly believed that a bell rope attached to the girdle of a woman in labour eased childbirth.

It Tolls for Thee

The frequent tolling of funeral bells must have induced a contemplative state of mind in the old days when the normal expectation of life was limited to about 40 years. It was generally accepted that until the passing bell had been rung the soul remained earthbound, since it only 'rose to heaven on the sound of the bell'. In Scotland the head of the corpse was occasionally pillowed upon a bell as an additional insurance against the Devil. In the north of England the tolling of bells was often codified into easily recognizable terms: 'nine knells for a man, six for a woman and three for a child.' The mournful notes of the passing bell constituted a general summons to the parish to pray for the soul of the dying, while at the same time serving as a charm to protect the departed from the marauding devils which were present in force upon these occasions.

Following death, it was long the custom for a bellman to patrol the parish calling for prayers for the departed. In pre-revolutionary France the 'Bellman of the Dead', arrayed in deacon's robes adorned with death's heads and bones, marched through the streets ringing his bell and intoning for the benefit of his fellow citizens, 'Awake you that sleep and pray to God for the dead.'

At the centre of the demonic theory was the conviction that evil spirits expressed their hatred of Christianity by causing outbursts of thunder and lightning and mighty gales, which could be countered and overcome by the furious ringing of church bells, some of which bore the inscription *fulgura frango, dissipo ventos*, 'lightning and thunder, I break asunder.' John Aubrey, in his 17th century *Miscellanies*, refers to the ringing of the great bell at St Germain in Paris during storms, and at London's Old St Paul's there was a special fund to pay for 'ringing the hallowed belle in great tempestes and lightenynges'.

U.S. Travel Service

Above **The Liberty Bell in Independence Hall, Philadephia, first received its name during the anti-slavery movement of 1839**
Opposite **Church bell at Kritsa in Crete**

An 8th century formula for the blessing of bells refers to this meteorological theme.

> Whenever this bell sounds, let the power of enemies retire. So also the shadow of phantoms, the assault of whirlwinds, the stroke of lightnings, the injuries of tempests and every spirit of the storm winds.

The tolling of the church bells could be surprisingly effective against the witches and sorcerers who for centuries infested the night skies, since their fragile broomsticks could never withstand the dynamic impact of a truly clamorous peal. In the words of the old Italian peasant song:

Much the witches fear the spell.
When by night they hear a bell
Off they fly over the sky
When they hear dondo dondo.

The bell had a particularly ominous role to play in the awe-inspiring Christian rites of excommunication, popularly known as 'bell, book and candle', when it was tolled as if the sinner had already died.

Bells of Danger

The many ancient superstitious usages attached to bells and bell-ringing came under severe criticism at the Reformation. A questionnaire issued by the Archdeanery of York asks: 'Whether there be any within your parish or chapelry that use to ring bells superstitiously upon any abrogated holiday or the eves thereof?' The ritual use of church bells became more strictly controlled; nevertheless, as far as laymen were concerned, much of the old mystique of the bell survived Puritan interference. Even today one comes upon the belief among older people that those born at the chime hours, 3, 6, 9 and 12 o'clock are not only blessed with second sight but can see ghosts. An even more persistent superstition holds that it is highly ominous for a church bell to ring without human aid. This portends a death in the parish within seven days, especially if it occurs during a church service, while should it boom at a wedding it means that either the bride or groom is doomed to an early death. This belief has survived in the modern superstition that the ringing of a telephone without apparent cause will be followed by bad news.

Bells of Joy

There is no more joyful a sound than the ringing of church bells at weddings when the clamour is at its most tumultuous: nor so much solemnity as when they toll for a royal funeral. At the death of any member of the British royal family the bell of St Paul's chimes for an hour, and for two at the death of the monarch.

The joy expressed by the jingling of bells was integral with the motley world of dancing humanity, whether it was the Jester and folk dancer of old Europe or the Deer Dancer of Mexico. The bell also had a considerable influence on spiritual life at sea, for it not only regulated the watches but was regarded as the ship's soul. However securely lashed, it invariably tolled when the vessel sank. The deeply-felt need to invest bells generally, and church bells in particular, with quasi-human qualities often took the most bizarre forms. It was believed, for instance, that bells refused to ring if they were insulted, or sweated blood with terror and took revenge for injuries inflicted upon them. ERIC MAPLE

FURTHER READING: C. Hole, *Encyclopedia of Superstitions* (Hutchinson, 1961) T. Ingram, *Bells in England* (Muller, 1954), A. H. Knappe, *The Science of Folklore* (Methuen, 1961).

BEOWULF

BEOWULF is the hero of the only long complete poem left to us in Anglo-Saxon which is not primarily Christian in content. The poem, of 3182 lines, is generally dated to the 8th century AD and survives in a manuscript from about 1000 AD in the British Museum. It is undoubtedly one of the outstanding achievements of the Anglo-Saxon period.

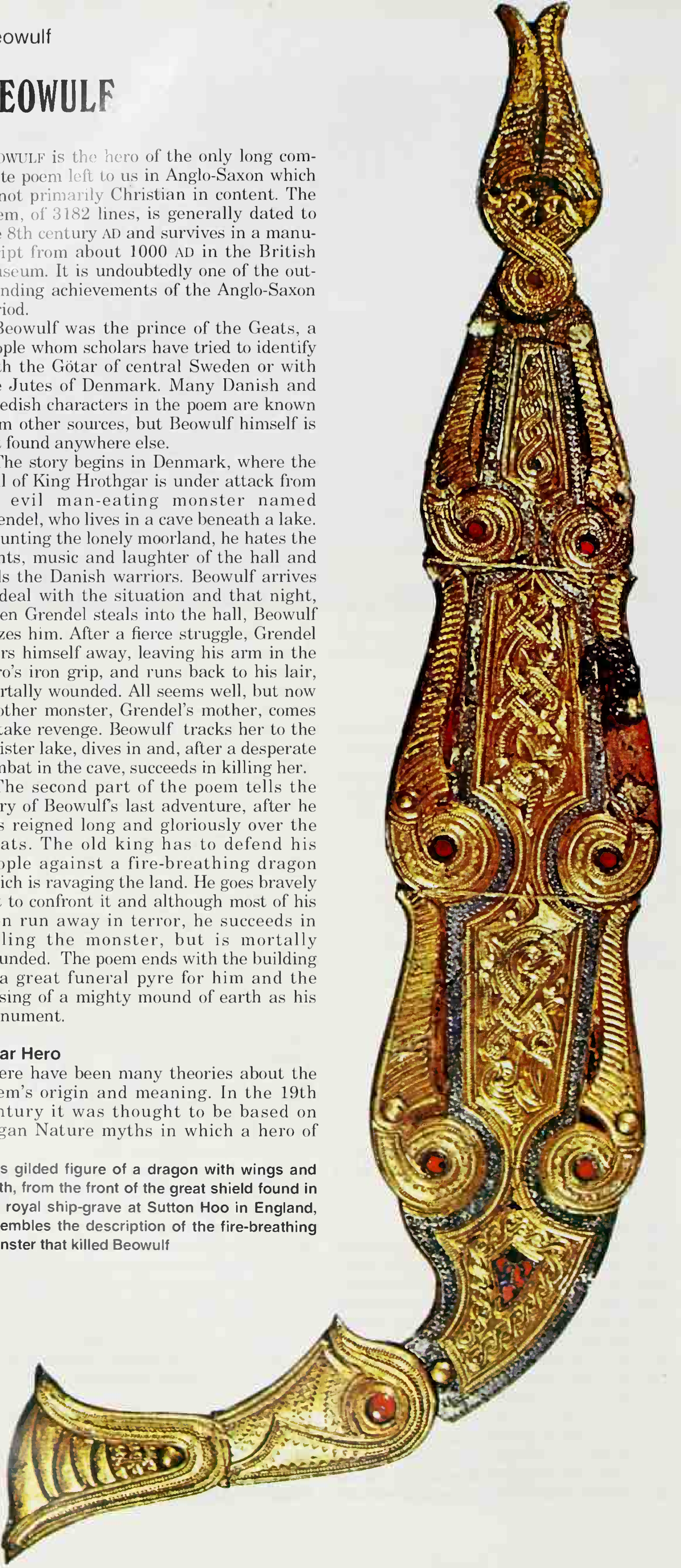
Beowulf was the prince of the Geats, a people whom scholars have tried to identify with the Götar of central Sweden or with the Jutes of Denmark. Many Danish and Swedish characters in the poem are known from other sources, but Beowulf himself is not found anywhere else.

The story begins in Denmark, where the hall of King Hrothgar is under attack from an evil man-eating monster named Grendel, who lives in a cave beneath a lake. Haunting the lonely moorland, he hates the lights, music and laughter of the hall and kills the Danish warriors. Beowulf arrives to deal with the situation and that night, when Grendel steals into the hall, Beowulf seizes him. After a fierce struggle, Grendel tears himself away, leaving his arm in the hero's iron grip, and runs back to his lair, mortally wounded. All seems well, but now another monster, Grendel's mother, comes to take revenge. Beowulf tracks her to the sinister lake, dives in and, after a desperate combat in the cave, succeeds in killing her.

The second part of the poem tells the story of Beowulf's last adventure, after he has reigned long and gloriously over the Geats. The old king has to defend his people against a fire-breathing dragon which is ravaging the land. He goes bravely out to confront it and although most of his men run away in terror, he succeeds in killing the monster, but is mortally wounded. The poem ends with the building of a great funeral pyre for him and the raising of a mighty mound of earth as his monument.

Bear Hero

There have been many theories about the poem's origin and meaning. In the 19th century it was thought to be based on pagan Nature myths in which a hero of light battled against darkness and winter. This is now discounted and the poem is regarded as the work of a single poet of Christian times, who may have used earlier lays in its making. Much in it is based on oral and native traditions. The presentation of the story is in keeping with the heroic oral poetry of other countries and periods, and many of the narrative's themes are familiar from early Germanic and Scandinavian tradition.



This gilded figure of a dragon with wings and teeth, from the front of the great shield found in the royal ship-grave at Sutton Hoo in England, resembles the description of the fire-breathing monster that killed Beowulf

Michael Holford

Archaeological evidence shows that the poem's descriptions of weapons, ornaments, halls and ships are in close agreement with Anglo-Saxon craftsmanship of the 6th and 7th centuries. In particular, objects found in the royal ship-grave at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk, dating from the first half of the 7th century, are reminiscent of those in the poem. The helmet found there closely resembles Beowulf's helmet, while on the great shield is set the gilded figure of a dragon with wings and teeth, like the monster in the poem. The ship buried in the grave gives new interest to the poem's description of the Danish king sent out to sea after death, surrounded by weapons and treasures. There is a well-established tradition in Scandinavian mythology of a divine king-ancestor departing by ship to the land of the dead, and both here and in the detailed descriptions of cremation funerals the poem shows a remarkable familiarity with pre-Christian traditions and practices as they survived in England in the last period of heathenism.

Use of folktale motifs has also been noted, in particular that of the Bear's Son, the hero who has certain bear-like characteristics. The name Beowulf is thought to mean 'Bee-Wolf', denoting the bear, the enemy of the bees because he steals their honey. There are also a number of Scandinavian stories in which the hero fights two monsters, a giant and a dragon, and goes down either below the water or under the earth. Traditions of both creatures of the Grendel type and dragons have left their mark on local folklore in various areas of England.

Certainly the poet drew on pagan traditions as well as on the Christian learning of the monasteries, fusing his material with great skill. Direct Christian references in the poem are limited almost wholly to the book of Genesis, but on the other hand the language and assumptions of the poem imply familiarity with Christian teaching. There are arguments about whether it was first composed as an oral work and written down later, at what date it was first committed to writing, and where. Its origins have been located in East Anglia, to which the Sutton Hoo treasure belongs, in Northumbria or in Mercia, one of the dominant Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of the 8th century under the great king Offa (d 796).

H.R.ELLIS DAVIDSON *

FURTHER READING: *Beowulf* trans. M. Alexander (Penguin, 1973); G. N. Garmonsway, J. Simpson and H. R. Ellis Davidson, *Beowulf and Its Analogues* (Dutton), which includes translations of other sources connected with the poem.

Moroccan Tourist Board

Moroccan Tourist Board

he Berbers of North Africa are devout Moslems ut have preserved some curious beliefs of heir own

Berbers as a race are not to be confused with Arabs, although they are Moslems and usually speak Arabic in addition to their own language *Above* The social and sexual liberty enjoyed by women is one of the main differences between Berbers and many other African races. Unveiled, the faces of Berber women are emphasized with ornate jewellery and brightly woven head-dresses

BERBERS

BERBER IS THE name given to the inhabit-
nts of North Africa, principally the
ationals of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia,
Iauretania and, to some extent, Libya.
The term distinguishes them from the Arabs,
rom whom they differ in language, customs
nd appearance.

During the Roman period, lasting from
bout 50 BC to 600 AD, the Berbers in the
ities became first Latin-speaking Romanized pagans, then Latin-speaking Romanized Christians, among whom was St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo.

The Arab invasions of Roman Africa at the end of the 7th century and through the first half of the 8th century swept away both the Latin culture and the Christian religion, suggesting that neither was very deep-rooted and that both were superimposed on the ancient Berber tradition.

The Berbers should not be confused with the Arabs, despite the fact that the Berbers are Moslems and usually speak Arabic in addition to their own language. But they stubbornly retain certain characteristics which go back to their ancient traditions.

The most striking of these characteristics is their treatment of, and attitude towards, women. Women go unveiled, take an active part in affairs, and, in the case of the Touareg, a Berber people who live mainly in the Sahara, have almost as much social and sexual liberty as women have in Europe. Among strictly orthodox Moslems, particularly in Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, such latitude is unheard of.

The Magic Cannon

The cannons of the Sultans of Morocco:
A whole rigmarole of ritual and belief grew around the cannons. They became, in effect, ambulant representatives of his Chereefian Majesty's person, possessing his power of *baraka* or blessing, his power to cure diseases, to receive petitions and offerings, and to grant asylum. Any malefactor who sat himself upon the shaft between the cannon's wheels acquired automatically the right of direct appeal to the Sultan, an appeal which no Sultan would refuse. 'I swear by the cannon of the Sultan' was a frequent and binding oath, and the cannons also received direct prayer, addressed customarily to their muzzles. They also received offerings, in the form of the heads of the enemy, and after a victory the cannons were completely hidden by the bloody heads piled on and around them. More bizarre still, during a temporary truce or parley in rebel territory, women of the Berber tribes could be seen kissing the big bronze gun barrels and praying to them for the defeat of the Sultan. The paradox was not apparent to them, for they venerated the Sultan as the *khalifa*, or representative, of God, and abhorred him as an oppressive tyrant of their people.

Gavin Maxwell *Lords of the Atlas*

The Holy Essence

The Berbers are extremely devout and rigorously observe the basic tenets of Koranic law: the daily prayers, the prescribed fasts pilgrimage to Mecca, and attendance at the mosque. The more bigoted of them are stil strongly anti-Christian and are even more hostile to the Jews, particularly since the establishment of the state of Israel.

Berbers reverence a great many holy men, both dead and living. These saints they say, can effect miraculous cures by reason of their *baraka* or 'holy essence' This concept of baraka is the key to the Berbers' religious convictions and, at the same time, the reason why Europeans have so often been puzzled and even shocked by some of the customs prevalent in Barbary as North Africa used to be called. Early travellers report the custom of collecting and conserving the spittle, the washing water and even the urine of the Moroccan sultans Women would hasten up with a cloth to catch the expectoration of their monarch, as i they were receiving a valuable gift. In their view, of course, they were, since baraka was involved, and this holy essence pervades everything that a shereef (a descendant o the Prophet) and the holy men possess o even touch.

Sultans, shereefs and saints all possess baraka as a sort of birthright. Others can acquire it. For instance, a wife who is excessively kind to her husband's second wife may become a holy woman with her special baraka. Little children, being without sin, also have this virtue: they are said 'to know the language of angels'. When they grow up, they lose their baraka until they become bridegrooms or brides. Once married and settled down, they lose the quality again, until the man grows old and grey. Then he recaptures something of his childhood's baraka. The mentally deranged are also believed to possess this holy essence and are never mistreated.

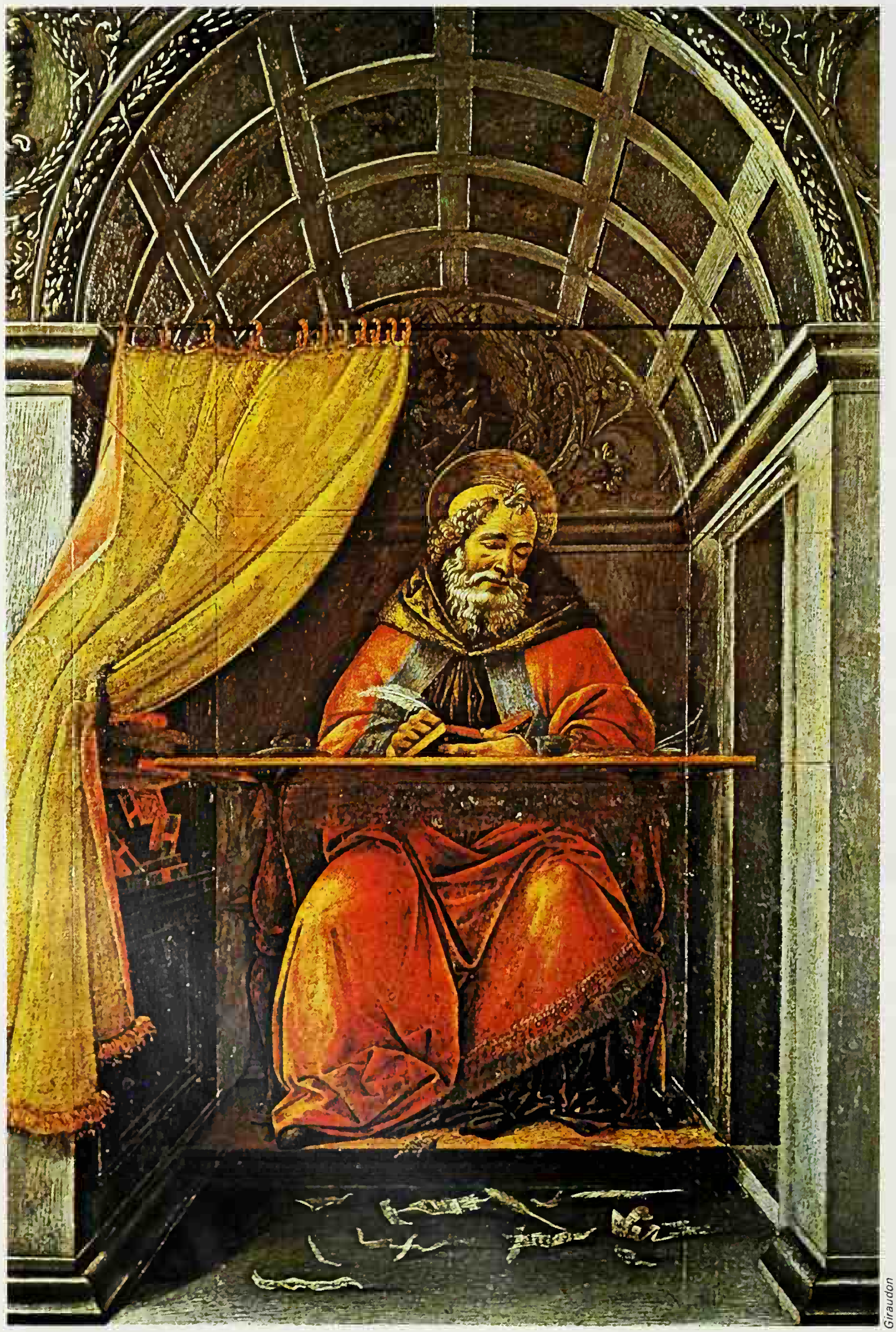
Spirits of Night

To the Berber, the world is full of good and evil forces, notably the *jinn*, the spiritual beings who inhabited the earth before the creation of man (see JINN). The jinn live underground and only emerge at night which is why the dark is more frightening than the light. However, they can be kept at bay with noise, and the louder the noise, the farther they remove themselves. This is the explanation of the firing of guns, rifles and pistols on important occasions like weddings.

Speculation as to the future of the Berbers must take into account the desire of the North African countries to modernize and industrialize as fast as possible. These processes are bound to mean the weakening and eventual abolition of old tribal conventions and customs.

JAMES WELLARD

FURTHER READING: H.T. Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature* (Longman, 1982); Anthony Wilkin, *Among the Berbers of Algeria* (Negro University Press, 1970).



Giraudon

St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo from 395 to 430 AD, and one of the most influential of all Christian theologians, was a Berber: painting by Botticelli

Many books, films and television programmes have been produced, describing weird events off the coast of Florida, but few accounts stand up to authentication

BERMUDA TRIANGLE

THE MYTH OF THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE may be said to have begun when five US Navy Grumman TBM Avenger light bombers left Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on a navigational training exercise on the afternoon of 5 December 1945. In rapidly deteriorating weather they lost track of their course, and the flight leader reported by radio that his compasses did not seem to be working. Sighting the Great Sale Cay to the north of the Bahamas – the point at which the flight was planned to turn westward on the return to Fort Lauderdale – he identified it as the Florida Keys, some 200 miles to the southwest. As darkness fell and the wind rose, he led his flight in one direction after another, until at some time after 7 pm they ran out of fuel and were forced to ditch. No sign of them was ever found.

Two years later the British Tudor IV airliner *Star Tiger* was nearing the end of a scheduled flight from the Azores to Bermuda. Strong headwinds had forced her down to a height of only 2000 feet and she was low on fuel; somewhere short of Bermuda, she vanished without trace.

Writer Vincent Gaddis was one of the first to seize on these events in his book *Invisible Horizons* (1965); Charles Berlitz, in two books, *The Bermuda Triangle* and *Without a Trace*, added to the story, quoting a wide variety of marine and aerial disappearances within the triangle of sea bounded by Bermuda, Puerto Rico, the Bahamas and Florida; and other books, novels, films and television documentaries have further developed the dramatic theme of the 'Devil's Triangle'.

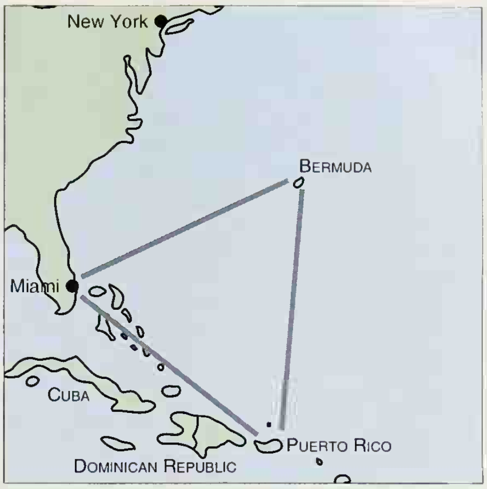
It is claimed that an unprecedented number of vessels have disappeared in the area, almost always in calm weather; that aircraft instruments fail; and that even a weather satellite has regularly malfunctioned while passing over the region.

Seeking an Explanation

The explanations put forward for the phenomenon have been many. John Wallace Spencer, in *Limbo of the Lost*, proposes that ships and aircraft 'are actually being taken away from our planet' by UFOs (see UFO). On the other hand Ivan T. Sanderson, in *Invisible Residents*, suggested that an intelligent civilisation existed on the sea bed (see ATLANTIS) and that the 'abducted' ships and crews were taken periodically for an examination of mankind.

Other explanations have seized on magnetic anomalies that appear to affect navigational instruments; small 'black holes'; or possibly openings to other dimensions where time runs at a different rate.

Unfortunately for these theorists, their arguments appear to be based upon a misinterpretation of the facts. The Bermuda Triangle is one of the busiest traffic areas in the world: shipping and aircraft lanes converge from Europe and the south Atlantic, and coasters, fishing boats and pleasure craft are also present in large numbers. In addition, the area is close to the tracks of many hurricanes, and violent storms are frequent – even Shakespeare referred to 'the still-vex'd Bermoothes'. More than 150,000 vessels pass through the area in the course of a year: of these less than 100 are lost, and only some 20 or 30 without trace.



The 'Triangle' between Bermuda and Florida

Lawrence Kusche, a librarian at Arizona State University, and subsequently the Englishman Paul Begg, have investigated a number of the more outstanding cases cited by the proponents of the Bermuda Triangle 'theory'. They have shown that frequently, when it had been claimed that the disappearances took place in calm weather and under clear skies, the conditions were in fact violently stormy – and that a number had occurred many hundred miles away .

Typical of the distortion of fact on which the fantastic theories are based is the case of the freighter *Sandra*. She is said to have been 355 feet in length, to have carried a crew of 28, and to have disappeared inexplicably in calm seas, and under blue skies, in June 1950. In fact, the *Sandra* had a length of only 185 feet, carried a crew of 11, and vanished in hurricane-force winds in April 1950.

In another case, a Douglas DC-3 disappeared on 28 December 1948. It is claimed that the pilot radioed that he could see the lights of Miami, and was standing by for landing instructions; the aircraft then vanished and, although the sea below the approach was only 20 feet deep, no trace of the aircraft was ever found. The facts are that the plane had a defective radio, that the last message received reported its distance as 50 miles from Miami, and that, although much of the sea bottom is only 20 feet below the surface, it plunges in some places as deep as 5000 feet.

As for the weather satellite that allegedly malfunctioned over the Bermuda Triangle – and only over the triangle – the explanation was simple. The job of the satellite was to collect data on cloud formations and movement and transmit this back to Earth. Part of the data was stored on tape aboard the satellite, and then transmitted in a burst, after which the tape had to be rewound for further recording, so that temporarily there was no transmission – and this was at a time when the satellite's orbit brought it over the 'Triangle'.

The Persistent Myth

And so the revealing evidence continues. The legend of the Bermuda Triangle is a contemporary example of a phenomenon that is characteristic of the way in which myths have developed throughout history: the need to distort available facts in order to support a previously-formulated system of belief. Nevertheless, there are still those who believe, as Alan Landsberg wrote in *Secrets of the Bermuda Triangle*, that 'something strange is unquestionably happening' (see URBAN MYTHS).

Time Warp in the Triangle

One of the strangest reported experiences in the Bermuda Triangle was that of a young pilot, Bruce Gernon jr, who, with his father as copilot, was flying his Beechcraft Bonanza from Andros Island in the Bahamas to Palm Beach, Florida, on 4 December 1970.

Some time after takeoff, Gernon found himself approaching 'a strange, cigar-shaped cloud'. He increased speed to fly above it, but it seemed to rise to meet him, and then surrounded the aircraft. Seeing a tunnel through the cloud, with blue sky at the end of it, he dived towards it – but the cloud seemed to be something very out of the ordinary. 'The walls were glowing white,' Gernon later reported, 'with small white clouds rotating clockwise round the interior.' The aircraft seemed to move faster and faster, and Gernon and his father felt a sensation of weightlessness for some seconds.

When the plane emerged from the cloud tunnel, it entered a greenish haze, quite unlike the expected blue sky. As he tried to work out his position, Gernon was alarmed to see that his compass was rotating counter-clockwise; his instruments were not functioning, and he could not contact any radio tower.

Then he caught sight of land ahead, and from his estimated flight time he took it to be Bimini keys, a little over halfway between Andros and Palm Beach. A minute or two later, as he came closer, he was surprised to recognise Miami.

Landed at Palm Beach, Gernon again checked his instruments. According to his account, a flight that normally took over an hour had lasted only 45 minutes, and he had used 12 fewer gallons of fuel.

A similar phenomenon is reported to have been experienced by the passengers and crew of an Eastern Airlines plane that disappeared from the Miami radar screens for a full ten minutes. Emergency procedures were immediately put into operation, but the aircraft suddenly reappeared, and landed safely – but with every clock and watch on board, it is said, ten minutes slow.

However, subsequent investigations of both these incidents were unable to uncover any flight plan or incident report to substantiate the allegations.

This remarkable woman gave unstintingly of her restless gifts in her successive devotions to Anglo-Catholicism, atheism, women's emancipation, Theosophy and Indian nationalism, but her interest in the occult remained a devouring passion.

ANNIE BESANT

ANNIE BESANT ENDED her autobiography with these words: 'In life, through death, to life, I am but the servant of the great Brotherhood, and those on whose heads but for a moment the touch of the Master has rested in blessing can never again look upon the world save through eyes made luminous with the radiance of the Eternal Peace.' At this time (1893) she had been a Theosophist, a servant of the 'White Brotherhood', for only four years; but she had found a spiritual resting-place, a Master and a cause, after years of feverish and anguished seeking. To the end of her life she remained, and is remembered as, a Theosophist and a great humanitarian.

Annie Wood was born in London in 1847. Her father, William Wood, was versatile to the verge of instability; her mother, Emily Roche Morris, was calm, stable and conventionally pious. Annie, the second of three children, showed an early aptitude for religion and after being confirmed at the age of 14 became an intense and romantic Anglo-Catholic, immersing herself in the sacramental life of the Church and in the writings of the Church Fathers. She later confessed that she took her religion 'in strenuous fashion', speaking of her 'headlong vigour of conviction and practice', and allowing that she was 'of the stuff from which fanatics are made'.

In this phase she might well have become a nun, had the opportunity presented itself; but it did not, and in 1867 she married the Rev Frank Besant, an Anglican clergyman. It was anything but a love match. When her marriage had become no more than an unpleasant memory, she summed it up in these words: '. . . out of sheer weakness and fear of inflicting pain I drifted into an engagement with a man I did not pretend to love.' A friend, the journalist W. T. Stead, put it more crudely: 'She could not be the bride of Heaven, and therefore became the bride of Mr Frank Besant. He was hardly an adequate substitute.'

Free Thought and Birth Control

Gradually she moved from orthodox Christianity towards atheism. In desperation she consulted E. B. Pusey, the leader of the type of high Anglicanism she then professed. She was met with no understanding and was warned that she was suffering from intellectual pride. In 1873 she separated from her husband, and wrote the first of her anti-orthodox, free thought pamphlets, 'On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth'.

In the following year, she read for the first time a copy of the *National Reformer*, journal of the National Secular Society, which she joined almost at once. The leader of the NSS was Charles Bradlaugh, then approaching the peak of his career as a radical politician and atheist; he and Annie Besant were kindred spirits. Within a few days she was offered work on the staff of the *National Reformer*, and soon became a lecturer on free thought topics, often travelling in the company of Bradlaugh. There is little doubt that she and Bradlaugh would have married, had they been free to do so; but both were legally bound, and by the time they were free, it was too late.

Mrs Besant's rise to fame and influence within the company of the secularists was meteoric (not the last time this was to happen, the pattern being repeated in other movements she was to join). In 1875 she became a vice-president of the National Secular Society. In 1877 she was prosecuted, with others, for selling 'obscene literature'— a book called *The Fruits of Philosophy*, advocating birth control. She was acquitted, but a court case the following year was less successful from her point of view, for she lost the custody of her daughter, Mabel, to Frank Besant, who accused his wife of propagating 'the principles of Atheism' (she had published a book called *The Gospel of Atheism* in 1877), of associating with 'an Infidel Lecturer and Author named Charles Bradlaugh', and of publishing 'an indecent and obscene pamphlet'. Obviously, therefore, he thought that she was not a fit and proper person to have charge of a child.

Conversion to Theosophy

During the next ten years, Mrs Besant was tireless in her advocacy of feminist causes. She led the match-girls' strike of 1888, became one of the first women to enrol in London University (though she never obtained a degree) and continued her fight against orthodox Christianity, if anything more violently than before. In 1884 she met George Bernard Shaw, and joined the Fabian Society in 1885, soon becoming a member of its Executive Committee. Shaw later described her as 'a woman of swift decisions', who 'always came into a movement with a bound, and was preaching the new faith before the astonished spectators had the least suspicion that the old one was shaken'. This was the beginning of her ideological split with Bradlaugh, a split which became irrevocable in 1889, when to everyone's utter amazement Mrs Besant suddenly announced that she had become a Theosophist.

The reasons for this appear to have been twofold. First and perhaps most important, Annie Besant was religious by nature. Her violent rejection of orthodox Christianity was an emotional consequence of her unhappy marital experience with a priest of the Church of England, and there remained within her a spiritual void which sooner or later had to be filled. It was not without significance that she later confessed that for ten years or more, while preaching materialism and atheism, she had nevertheless remained unconvinced by her own arguments and, for that reason perhaps, had shouted all the louder.

The second reason was the influence exerted on her by the extraordinary figure of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, the co-foundress of the Theosophical Society, whose book *The Secret Doctrine* she had reviewed, and whom she met for the first time in March 1889 (see BLAVATSKY, THEOSOPHY). H.P.B., as she was known among Theosophists, was only the latest in a number of decisive masculine influences on Mrs Besant (for the masculine elements in H.P.B.'s personality were plain). Her public reputation was not of the best; but Mrs Besant chose to ignore this, arguing that even if Blavatsky were a fraud, this did nothing to invalidate the aims and teachings of the Theosophical Society.

These aims were summed up under three points: to found a Universal Brotherhood without distinction of race or creed; to forward the study of 'Aryan' literature and philosophy (later modified to the study of comparative religion); and to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers latent in man. H.P.B., with a shrewd eye to a potentially valuable disciple, admitted Annie Besant to the inner counsels of the Society almost at once. By June 1889 she had become a member of the Esoteric Section of the Blavatsky Lodge, an inner circle specializing in the occult (another member of which at this time was the poet W. B. Yeats). Two years later, H.P.B. wrote to the American Theosophist leader, W. Q. Judge: 'It is only a few months that she studies occultism with me in the innermost group of the ES, and yet she has passed far beyond the others. She is not psychic or spiritual in the least – all intellect; yet she hears Master's voice when alone, sees his light and recognizes his voice.' 'Master' was Master Morya, one of the two greatest Tibet-based 'Mahatmas', or great souls (the other being Koot Hoomi), whose disciple Mrs Besant had become.

On H.P.B.'s death in 1891, a struggle for succession began between British, American and Indian factions. Mrs Besant eventually emerged as the leader of all but a section of the American Theosophists, who went their own way. In 1893 she accompanied a Theosophical delegation to the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago and late in the same year set off on her first visit to India, thus beginning yet another phase in her kaleidoscopic life.

The Forged Letters

Soon after her arrival in India, she was approached by a group of Brahmins with a view to leading a national movement on Hindu lines. This would have been as distasteful to most Theosophists (who were officially neutral in religious matters) as it was to the Anglo-Indian community, and she was wise to refuse – for the time being. Instead she devoted herself wholeheartedly to the consolidation of the Theosophical movement, and to her own progress in the occult arts. In this latter quest she was profoundly influenced by an ex-Anglican clergyman named C. W. Leadbeater, a man whose moral character was frequently called in question, and who was suspended for a time from membership of the Theosophical Society, but whose hold on Mrs Besant was so strong that hypnotism has been suspected.

Annie Besant, self-styled 'servant of the great Brotherhood' and the most famous of British Theosophists. She believed 'that the great Sages exist...they wield powers and possess knowledge before which our control of Nature and knowledge of her ways is but child's play'

Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

The struggle for leadership of the TS had resulted, among other things, in the revelation that some of the letters supposedly written by the Mahatmas had been forged.

The Krishnamurti Episode

By 1908 Mrs Besant's attention had begun to turn to the Hindu doctrine of avatars (incarnations), which held that God (in this case Vishnu) became man whenever circumstances warranted it; this could be read in the Bhagavad Gita, a work which Mrs Besant had published in an English version in 1895. Was the time now ripe for a new incarnation, for the appearance of a new world teacher? Mrs Besant felt that it was. And one was forthcoming.

Leadbeater believed that he had found the chosen one in a Brahmin youth, Jeddu Krishnamurti, and Mrs Besant followed his lead. The whole of the Krishnamurti episode was a fateful, tragi-comic mistake. The boy was 'discovered' in 1908. Adopted by Leadbeater and Mrs Besant, he was groomed for spiritual stardom for years on end, despite the protests of his bewildered father. The tragedy was reserved for Mrs Besant, who lived to see her protege renounce all pretensions of spiritual leadership. The TS also suffered; its sponsorship of Krishnamurti was one of the main causes of the defection of Rudolf Steiner, and the foundation, in 1912, of the Anthroposophical Society (see STEINER).

During these years advanced occult experiments were carried out by Leadbeater and Mrs Besant, experiments which resulted in a number of publications, including *Man: Whence, How and Whither* (1913) . This book is devoted to tracing out the past incarnations of Theosophical and other personalities, and makes fascinating, if enigmatic, reading. The characters are given classical names: Mrs Besant is Herakles, Leadbeater Sirius, and Blavatsky Vajra (Indra's thunderbolt in Hindu mythology). Others who appear include Bradlaugh as Lutetia and Julius Caesar as Corona.

The Fall from Favour

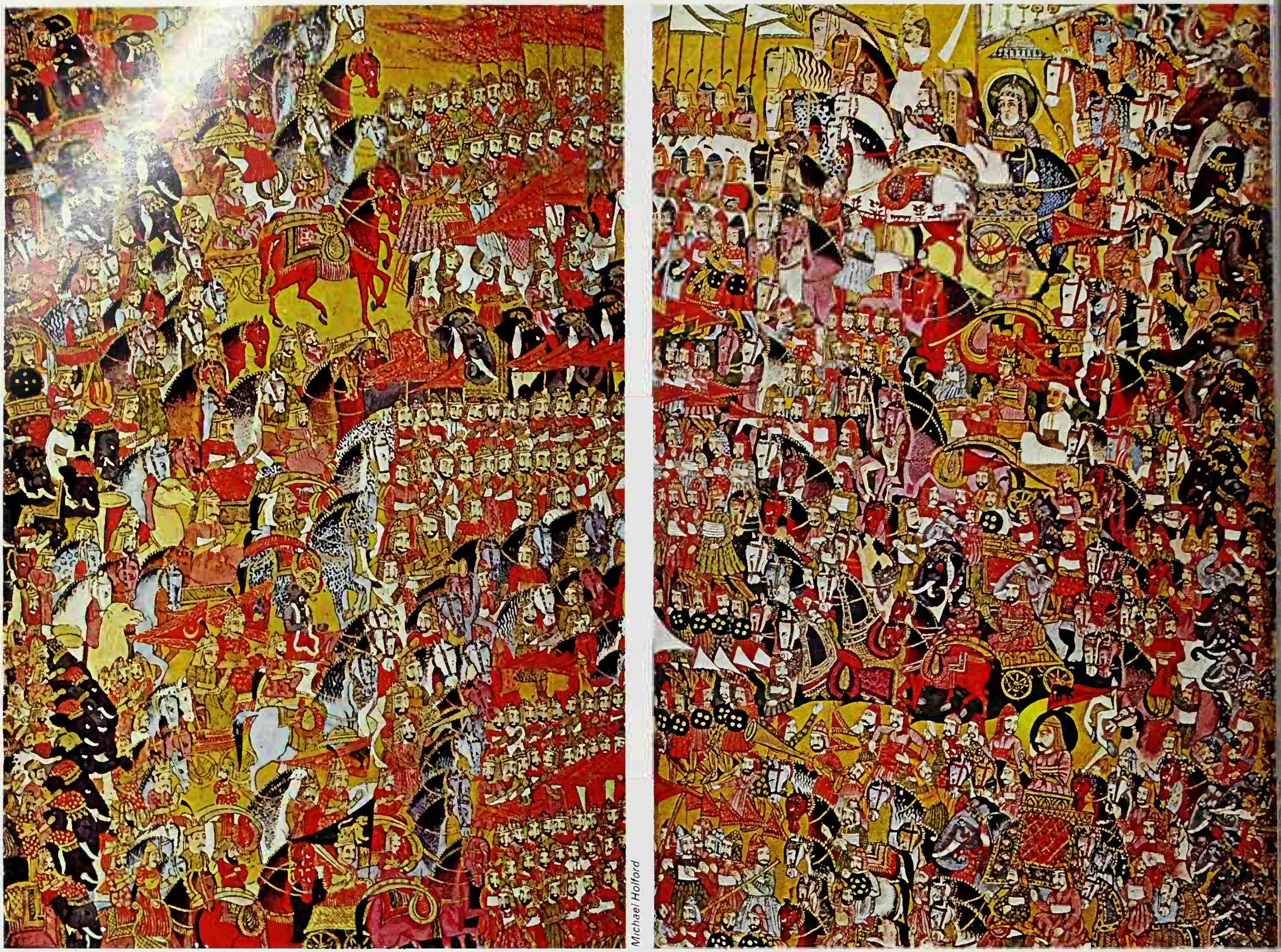
Although long sympathetic to the cause of Indian nationalism, Mrs Besant was not actively involved in Indian national politics until 1913, when she delivered a series of lectures in Madras on the subject 'Wake Up, India!' The following year saw her once more entering the field of political journalism with the *Commonweal*, 'A Journal of National Reform', and the *Madras Standard*, a newspaper which she took over and transformed into the *New India*.

She quickly achieved recognition as a nationalist leader. In 1916 she founded the Home Rule for India League, and in 1917 she was for a time interned by the authorities. On her emergence from internment she was swept to the Presidency of the Indian National Congress on a wave of popular sentiment. Her triumph was short-lived. Nationalism found another leader, M. K. Ghandi, who was less tied to constitutional methods, and her moderate attitudes fell out of favour with what was, to her, bewildering suddenness. As long as political power rested with the middle-class intelligentsia, she was a force to be reckoned with, but when the balance shifted to the masses of the people she found herself, for the first time in her life, an anachronism. She was a woman; she spoke no Indian language; and she was, despite everything, still English in her respect for authority.

The last years of the Great War and the 1920s saw a further profound crisis within the Theosophical Society, as Leadbeater was consecrated bishop in the Old Catholic Church. Soon disowned by the Old Catholics, he founded the Liberal Catholic Church, taking many Theosophists with him. The final blow fell in 1929, when Krishnamurti, tired of being manipulated by others, renounced his 'Messiahship'. Annie Besant died in 1933. She was 85 years old.

ERIC J.SHARPE

FURTHER READING: A. H. Nethercot's two books, published by Hart-Davis, The *First Five Lives of Annie Besant* (1961) and *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, are excellent but make no attempt to grapple with her Theosophical thought. She described her occult investigations in *Man: Whence, How and Whither* (Theosophical Publishing House, 1913).



Michael Holford

The Sure Highway to Salvation

BHAGAVAD GITA

'Perhaps the most important mystical treatise in all the mystical traditions', the Gita added a new dimension to Hinduism – the element of love and devotion to a personal God

OF ALL THE HINDU scriptures the *Bhagavad Gita* is the best known, the best loved and the most read. In itself this is a little surprising, for it does not form part of the Hindu sacred canon, the *Veda*. In fact it is a tiny episode in India's vast epic, the *Mahabharata*, the story of the fratricidal war between two branches of the Kuru family; the hundred sons of Dhritarashtra on the one hand, and their cousins, the five sons of Pandu, on the other.

The principal ally of the sons of Pandu is Krishna, the chief of a related tribe, and he is strongly in favour of war. With this in mind he had offered himself as charioteer to Arjuna, the third of the Pandava brothers and his closest friend, and Arjuna had accepted. All seems ready for the battle to begin, but there is a last-minute hitch. Arjuna's warlike enthusiasm had never been in doubt, but at the last moment his nerve fails. Not that he is a coward, far from it, but he is overcome by a sense of the futility of it all and a vast compassion for the useless suffering that the war is bound to bring.

Krishna, however, is not only a tribal chieftain, but also God. He is the incarnation of the great god Vishnu and it is his will that the war should take place. This last-minute hitch does not please him and he finds Arjuna's compassion singularly out of place. Humanly speaking, Arjuna's arguments are in accordance with all that is best in the Indian tradition: it can never be right to kill one's own kinsmen, and Arjuna protests with all the ardour of an essentially chivalrous nature.

The incarnate God is not impressed. 'Do not play the eunuch,' he says, 'for this ill beseems you: give up this vile faint-heartedness. Stand up, chastiser of the foe.' But Arjuna is no longer prepared to go against his conscience out of blind obedience to the incarnate God: he demands solid reasons for embarking on a course of action which seems to him wholly wrong.

On the purely moral plane Krishna has a very weak case and he knows it: so the

n the *Bhagavad Gita,* the best-loved of all Hindu scriptures, the god Krishna explains the ature of the universe, as it appears to both Hindus and Buddhists, to his friend Arjuna. This lengthy philosophical poem is in act only a small part of a vast epic, the *Mahabharata,* which tells of the fratricidal war between two branches of the Kuru family *eft* Two facing pages show the opposing arties ranged against each other, chariots gainst chariots, infantry against infantry, lephants against elephants, so as to ensure fair trial of strength. These and all the lustrations that follow are from a Persian ranslation of the *Mahabharata,* dated 1761–63: British Museum

rgument is very soon switched from the moral to the metaphysical level, and this ives the Gita a timeless quality that its etting in the epic would scarcely lead one to xpect. Krishna's moral arguments are two: irst it is Arjuna's caste-duty to fight; he is a warrior by caste, and the first duty of a warrior is to go to war. And even if he is so heretical as to set aside his caste-duty, then t least he might pay some attention to the dictates of honour. What *will* people say?

> All creatures will recount your dishonour which will never pass away; and dishonour in a man well trained to honour is an evil surpassing death. 'From fear he fled the battle-field' – so will they think of you, the mighty charioteers. Greatly esteemed by them before, you will bring contempt upon yourself. And many a word that is better left unsaid will such men say who wish you ill, disputing your capacity. What could cause you greater pain than this?

Krishna, however, lays little store by these ethical arguments, for ultimately they mean very little. The really weighty argument is hat Arjuna, like any human being, is not really a free agent. What he does he is compelled to do by the very nature and structure of the universe. The ways of God are as mysterious in Hinduism as they are in Christianity, and it is not for man to question them since he cannot change them. How much more sensible to submit with a good grace than to kick against the pricks! Arjuna must see things as they are, and then he will have no cause to grieve, and in the Gita Krishna explains to his friend the nature of the universe as it was understood by Hindus and Buddhists alike. Once you have understood its nature, then you will have put aside all sorrow.

The Pearl of Great Price

The Hindu view of the universe conditions the Hindu view of salvation; and it is a very different view from our own. Its cornerstone is the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. With us man lives only once, and his conduct on earth conditions his future state of blessedness or woe. With the Hindus and the Buddhists things are very different. The soul has been in existence since before time began and it will continue to exist, imprisoned in a mortal body, for ever unless and until it can find a way of escape which will free it from matter once and for all. This, and not the purely ethical considerations about peace and war, is what is really important: this is the pearl of great price compared with which all the doings of men on earth are as chaff.

This is also Buddhist teaching; and it is significant that the main Buddhist teachings are tacitly assumed in the first chapters of the Gita. There is no such thing as final death: re-birth follows on death just as surely as death follows on birth. Physical death is simply a staging-post on our pilgrimage through time: there is nothing final about it, and hence there is no need to grieve: for 'who thinks this self can be a slayer, who thinks that it can be slain, both these have no right knowledge: it does not slay nor is it slain.'

But this is only half the reason. The association of the 'self' with the organism we usually consider to be ourselves is really fortuitous: the two do not belong to the same order of existence. The second we all know: it is everything we are accustomed to think of as ourselves: our body, our mind, our emotions and that part of us which discriminates between right and wrong, the combination of intelligence and will which we in the West call our soul. All this is the sphere of material Nature, ultimately reducible, then, to matter.

None of these constitutes the 'self', not even the soul, for one and all are concerned with action in this world, and action *(karma)* is not the sphere of 'wisdom' *(jnana)*, which is another word for pure contemplation. This is the province of the 'self', and it is beyond time and space and therefore beyond action, whether good or evil, since action can only take place in time and space. Death cannot touch the self, for what is timeless is necessarily free from death. Hence, to realize the self within you is to achieve immortality in this life. But how can this be done?

The Goal of Detachment

The answer is very simple: detach yourself from all things of this world, both the objective world outside you and, even more important, the subjective world within you. Your greatest enemy is desire; and if you but conquer desire, then you will reach that state of holy indifference where you will be invulnerable to all the vicissitudes of life and death. 'Hold pleasure and pain, profit and loss, victory and defeat, to be the same: then brace yourself for the fight. So will you bring no evil on yourself.'

There is an apparent contradiction here; for once one has reached a state of sublime indifference, then what possible point can there be in fighting or, for that matter, in not fighting? Arjuna is very quick to see this. He asks why Krishna commands him 'to do a cruel deed' in going to war, and asks to be told 'the one simple way whereby I can attain the better part.'

From the Buddhist point of view which Krishna has hitherto been advocating, there is really no answer, for in Buddhism (and in some Hindu systems) there is a gulf fixed between the self and the world of space and time. Nirvana is that state of timeless bliss which lies altogether outside the phenomenal world, and which has nothing to do with God.

In the Gita, however, Krishna is God: and that makes a difference. As God he is both the still, unchanging state which the Buddhists call Nirvana, and also the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe: ultimately he is the sole agent since the universe is his body. Human beings are minute parts of him and the part cannot separate itself from the whole. As the whole acts so must it act too: its free will is apparent only, ultimately it must act in accordance with the will of God. At the end of the dialogue this is made very clear: 'In the region of the heart of all contingent beings dwells the Lord, twirling them hither and thither by his uncanny power like puppets mounted on a machine.'

How to Practise Yoga

Day after day, let the Yogi practise the harmony of soul: in a secret place, in deep solitude, master of his mind, hoping for nothing, desiring nothing.

Let him find a place that is pure and a seat that is restful, neither too high nor too low, with sacred grass and a skin and a cloth thereon.

On that seat let him rest and practise Yoga for the purification of the soul: with the life of his body and mind in peace; his soul in silence before the One.

With upright body, head, and neck, which rest still and move not; with inner gaze which is not restless, but rests still between the eyebrows;

With soul in peace, and all fear gone, and strong in a vow of holiness, let him rest with mind in harmony, his soul on me, his God supreme...

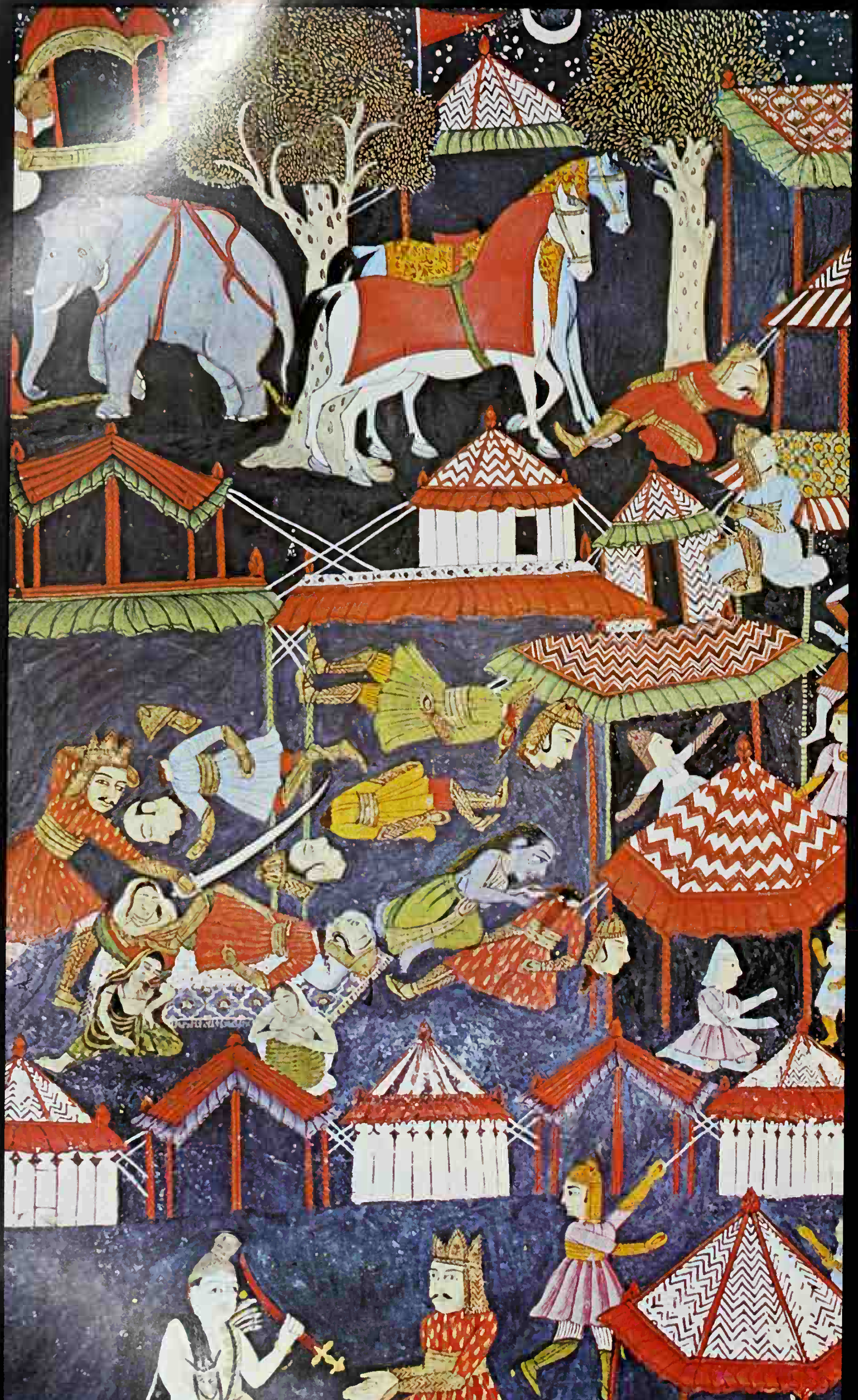
Yoga is a harmony. Not for him who eats too much, or for him who eats too little; not for him who sleeps too little, or for him who sleeps too much.

A harmony in eating and resting, in sleeping and keeping awake; a perfection in whatever one does. This is the Yoga that gives peace from all pain.

When the mind of the Yogi is in harmony and finds rest in the Spirit within, all restless desires gone, then he is a Yukta, one in God.

Then his soul is a lamp whose light is steady, for it burns in a shelter where no winds come.

The Bhagavad Gita (trans. Juan Mascaro)



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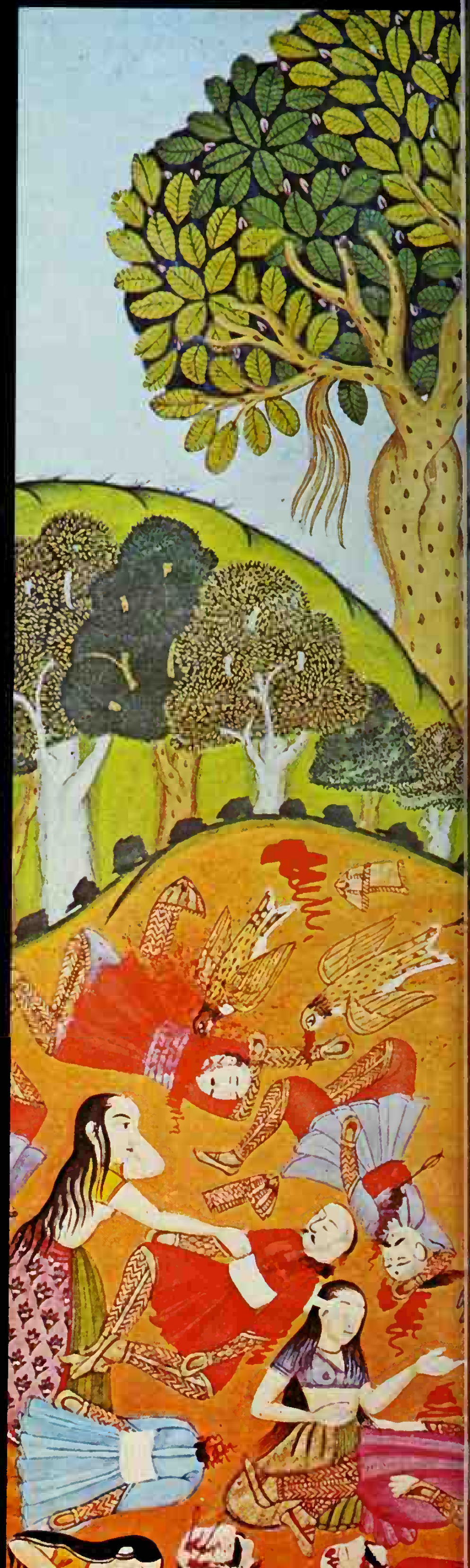
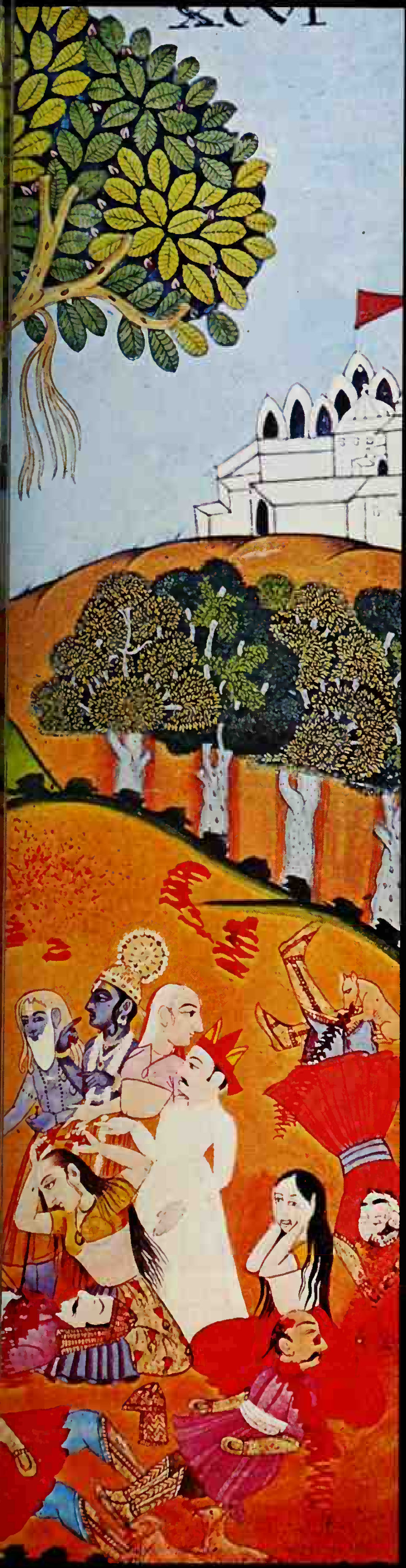


Salvation can be attained only by obeying God's law on earth, and the first duty of a member of the warrior-caste is to go to war. A night attack on the camp of the Pandu princes, who epitomize goodness and heroism



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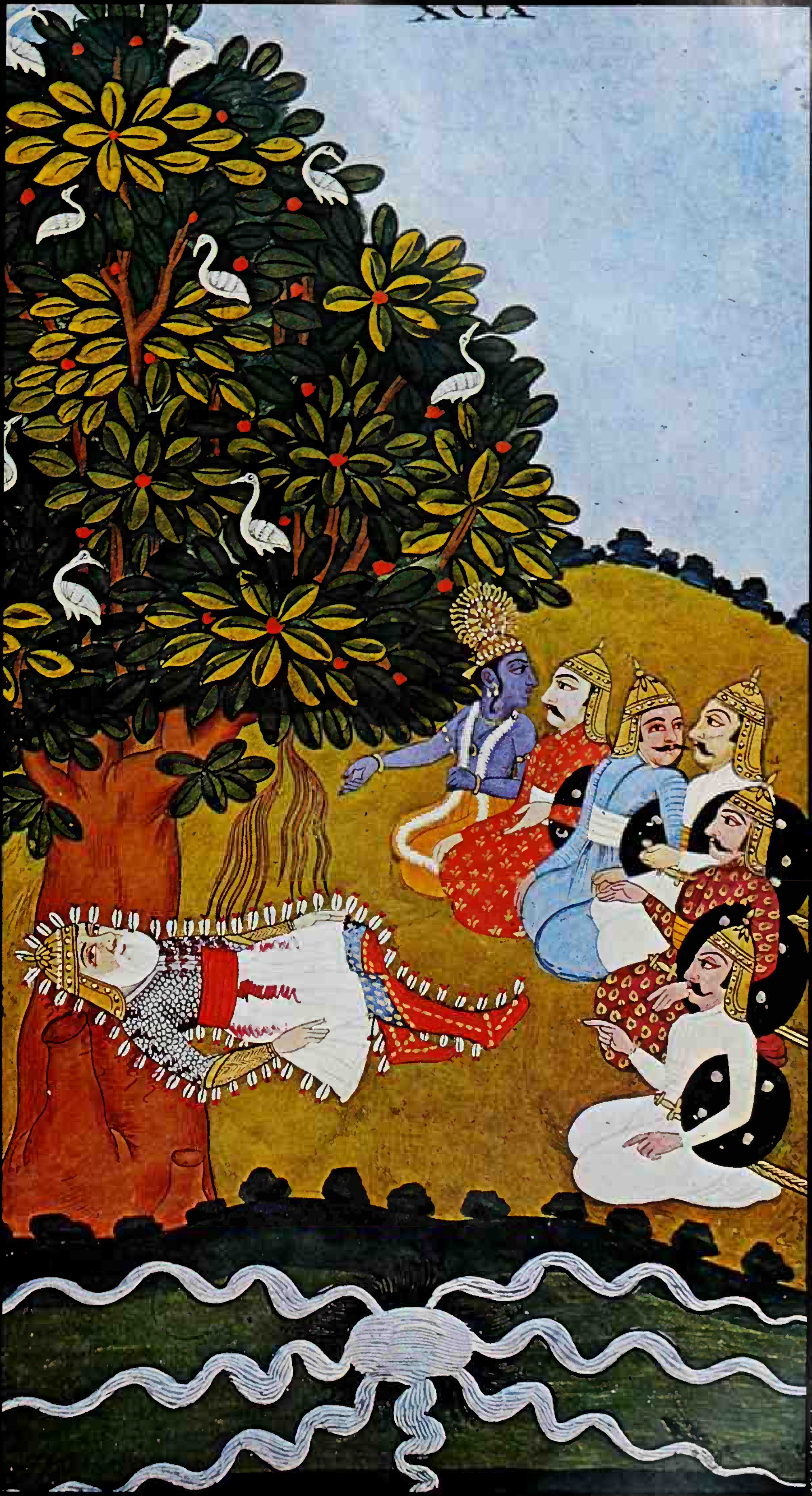
The opposing warriors, the Kauravas, symbolize wickedness. Their wives and mothers mourn over the fallen, while the god Krishna, who has willed the war, looks on. In Hinduism, it is not for men to question the ways of God



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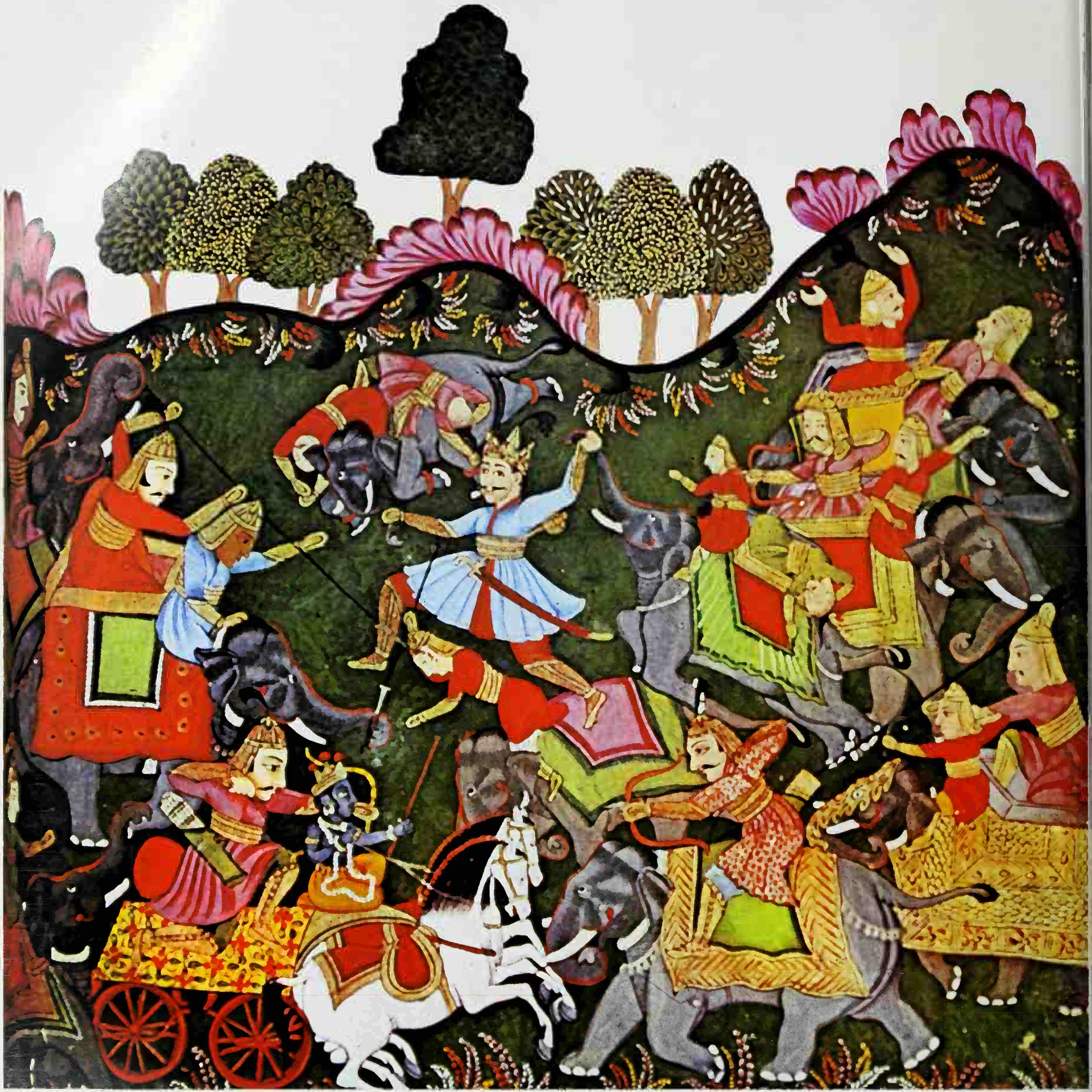
As Bhishma, commander of the Kaurava forces, lies dying from arrow wounds inflicted by Arjuna, he lectures the Pandu princes on government and persuades them not to renounce the world. The god Krishna looks on



The battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas: Arjuna's reluctance to fight in the war is the starting point of the *Bhagavad Gita's* teaching

It is not for man to question the ways of God: he should humbly continue in that state of life into which he has been born until, by detachment, his works are 'reduced to ashes in the fire of wisdom'. This is man's spiritual goal but it is not incompatible with his doing his caste-duty on earth, even if that means bloodshed and war. To do one's caste-duty is the normal means of salvation since it is the way laid down by God, but it must be done in a spirit of complete disinterestedness. 'Therefore detached, perform unceasingly the works that must be done, for the man detached who labours on to the highest must win through.'

> The man who puts away all desires and roams around from longing freed, who does not think, 'This I am', or 'This is mine', draws near to peace. This is the fixed still state of Brahman; he who wins through to this is nevermore perplexed.

This is the goal of the contemplative, though it does not yet mean union with God, for God is for the moment seen as the God who is active in the universe, and Nirvana or Brahman is a state altogether beyond the universe of space and time.

If, however, the man who has 'become Brahman' feels himself to be coterminous with the entire universe, if he has realized that 'sameness' which remains unchanged when all else changes, does this not imply that he has realized his own profound identity with the Absolute? And does this not mean that the personal God incarnate as Krishna will simply disappear from his sight? To this Krishna has an unequivocal answer:

> Who sees Me everywhere, who sees the All in Me, for him I am not lost, nor is he lost to Me. Who standing firm on unity communes in love with Me as abiding in all beings, in whatever state he be, that athlete of the spirit abides in Me.

Nirvana or 'liberation', then, or 'becoming Brahman', does not mean that one loses God; for liberation is not complete unless it is accompanied by love. This is what is wholly new in the Hindu tradition, and this is what makes the Gita perhaps the most important mystical treatise in all the mystical traditions. To achieve the integration of total personality by absorbing it entirely into its immortal centre is to 'become Brahman' and to reach Nirvana. But this is not the end but only the beginning of the mystical life, for the knowledge one has obtained of eternal, timeless life must be supplemented by love of a Person who is beyond both Brahman and Nirvana. And so Krishna says: 'Of all athletes of the spirit the man of faith who loves and worships Me, his inmost self absorbed in Me — he is the most fully integrated.'

To know the source of Nirvana, however, means both to love God and also to fear him, for he can shatter this apparently changeless state whenever he chooses. Hence it is necessary for Krishna to manifest himself also as power, and the climax of the Gita is a tremendous vision of Deity in all its blazing fury. Arjuna is terrified and cries out:

> Ablaze with many-coloured flames you touch the sky, your mouths wide open, gaping, your eyes distended, blazing: so do I see you and my inmost self is shaken: I cannot bear it, I find no peace, O Vishnu.

This is a totally new aspect of God, the aspect we are familiar with from the Bible but which is totally foreign to the 'Nirvana that is Brahman too', for God is irresistible power as well as perfect peace.

The Sure Highway

The Gita adds a new dimension to Hinduism - the dimension of love and devotion. It is intended for both the average sinner and the perfected saint who has detached himself from all transient things. For the sinner divine grace is always available and it can break the law of karma, according to which all actions must bear their inevitable fruit: all that Krishna asks is a loving faith. In the old religion salvation had been reserved to the three higher castes and the male sex: the Gita for the first time makes no such distinctions. Devoted love is both the means by which salvation or 'liberation' can be won, and after liberation has been won, the sure highway that leads on to God. The whole process is summed up at the end of the last chapter:

> Let a man be integrated by his soul now cleansed, let him restrain himself with constancy, abandon objects of sense -sound and all the rest - passion and hate let him cast out; . . . let him give up all thought of 'I', force, pride, desire and anger and possessiveness. let him not think of anything as 'mine', at peace; - if he does this, to becoming Brahman he is conformed. Brahman become with self serene, he grieves not nor desires; the same to all contingent beings he gains the highest love and loyalty to Me. By love and loyalty he comes to know Me as I really am, how great I am and who: and once he knows Me as I am, he enters Me forthwith.

But all this is conditional on obeying God's law on earth, and in Arjuna's case this means fighting a bloody war. 'If, relying on your ego, you should think, "I will not fight" vain is your resolve, for Nature will constrain you. You are bound by your own works which spring from your own nature.' But Krishna's last words are not a threat but a consolation:

> Bear Me in mind, love Me and worship Me, sacrifice, prostrate yourself to Me: so will you come to Me, I promise you truly, for you are dear to Me. Give up all things of law, turn to Me, your only refuge, for I will deliver you from all evils; have no care.

This in a nutshell is the message of the Gita. The 'knowledge' acquired in contemplation through which the 'self' realizes its own changeless and indestructible nature is supplemented by a devoted love of the personal God, who is the source of Brahman and Nirvana as much as he is of the everyday, visible world. (See also BRAHMAN; NIRVANA.)

R.C.ZAEHNER

FURTHER READING: Two important translations of the *Bhaghavad Gita* are: the W.D.P. Hill edition, with notes (Oxford University Press, 1967), and the translation by Christopher Isherwood and Swami Prabhayananda, with an introduction by Aldous Huxley (Vedanta Press, 1972). A translation by Juan Masacro, (Penguin edition, 1962); Georg Feuerstein, *Bhagavad Gita: an Introduction* (Theosophical Publishing House, 1983).

BIGFOOT

Known to native Americans as Sasquatch – 'hairy man' '– a giant hominid creature, similar to the Himalayan *yeti* (see ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN), has been recorded in various parts of the United States for over a century, and given the popular name of Bigfoot.

As early as 1851, a local newspaper in Greene County, Arkansas, reported that two hunters had seen a herd of cattle being chased by 'an animal bearing the unmistakeable likeness of humanity'. This 'wild man' was of gigantic stature and, after watching the hunters for a while, turned and ran away, leaping 12 to 14 feet at a time, and leaving footprints 13 inches long.

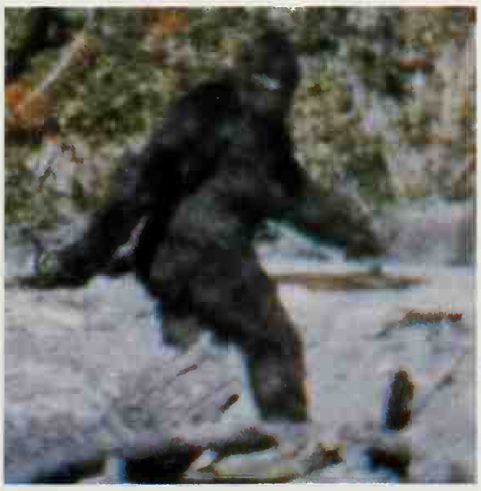
Indian legends picture the creature as a giant eight or nine feet tall, with a wide, flat nose and very long arms. It is said to be particularly concentrated in the region of Morris Mountain, some 60 miles inland from Vancouver.

Well over a thousand sightings of Bigfoot have been reported over the past 150 years. Most have been in the northwest USA and Canada, but in recent years a similar creature, known locally as the 'skunk ape', has been reported from as far south as Florida.

One of the more convincing sightings dates from 1967, when Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin were riding through the remote forest of the Bluff Creek area of northern California. They came upon a huge humanoid creature, some seven feet tall and covered all over with dark hair, squatting beside a creek. Patterson had his movie camera with him and, as the creature rose and hurried away, he leapt from his horse and followed it, filming as he ran. He shot 30 feet of colour film before the being disappeared into the trees; but he was also able to take casts of footprints, twice the size of a man's.

Critics have dismissed the film as that of an actor dressed in a gorilla suit, but footprints reported from other sightings have matched the casts, and many descriptions, by apparently objective observers, correspond with the appearance of the creature in the film.

Wild creature, or actor in a gorilla suit?: a still from Roger Patterson's movie film



Fortean Picture Library

Bigfeet are said to be shy but inquisitive, coming close to people camping in the forest, and pawing through their belongings at night. Sceptics dismiss sightings as poorly-observed bears, but for over a century the descriptions of Bigfoot have remained consistent.

Several people claim to have had the opportunity to observe the creature from hiding, and all agree that it is some 6 to 8 feet in height and heavily built; human-like, although covered with dark hair, and walking upright. Perhaps the most remarkable report was that of Albert Ostman, who alleged in 1924 that he had been kidnapped by a Bigfoot near Toba Inlet in British Columbia, and held captive by a family of four for several days. He finally escaped by offering the father of the family a large amount of snuff, and fleeing as the creature gasped for breath.

Several searches have been mounted for Bigfoot, but its mountain home is difficult terrain broken by impassable ravines. Some caves were found near Morris Mountain that showed signs of past habitation, though whether by long-dead Indians or hairy hominids no one can say. Bigfoot seems destined to remain a representative of the universal mythic wild man, from the yeti and 'Neanderthal' survivors of central Asia to the Tarzans of modern fiction. (See URBAN MYTHS.)

BILOCATION

FATHER TRILLES, a Roman Catholic missionary in Africa, talked one day in 1913 to a medicine-man who said he was going to a conference of colleagues the next day at a place that was four days' journey away. Asked how he could possibly get there in time, the man said mysteriously that he had his methods. Father Trilles asked him to deliver a message to a merchant who lived on the way, and bring back a box. The medicine-man said he would deliver the message, but he could not carry anything back. The priest watched as he smeared himself with ointment, walked round a fire several times, chanting, and fell into a cataleptic trance. The priest then stayed beside his motionless body for the next 12 hours, until the medicine-man recovered consciousness and said he had attended the meeting and delivered the message. Three days later the merchant arrived, bringing the box which Father Trilles had asked for. He explained that a voice had called to him from outside his house three nights before, telling him the priest wanted the box.

In the West, bilocation is one of the peculiar powers attributed to Christian saints, though not as frequently reported as levitation (see LEVITATION), bodily elongation, surviving without food and other physical phenomena associated with mysticism. A famous case is that of St Alphonsus Liguori, the 17th-century Italian monk and theologian, in 1774. He fell into a profound trance in his cell in a monastery near Naples. After five days he came round and told the brethren, who knew he had never left his cell, that he had been at the death-bed of Pope Clement XIV in Rome, which was four days' journey away. People who had been at the dying pope's bedside testified to having seen the monk there for several hours and said he had spoken to them and helped with the last rites.

In another case, long before in 1227, St Anthony of Padua, the great Franciscan preacher, was well into his sermon in a church in Limoges in France when he remembered that he was supposed to be at another service in a chapel in the town. He stopped preaching, pulled his hood over his head and remained motionless in the pulpit in full view of the congregation, while at the other chapel he appeared, chanted the lesson and left. At which point, in the church the silent figure pushed back his hood and continued with his sermon.

The Lady in Blue

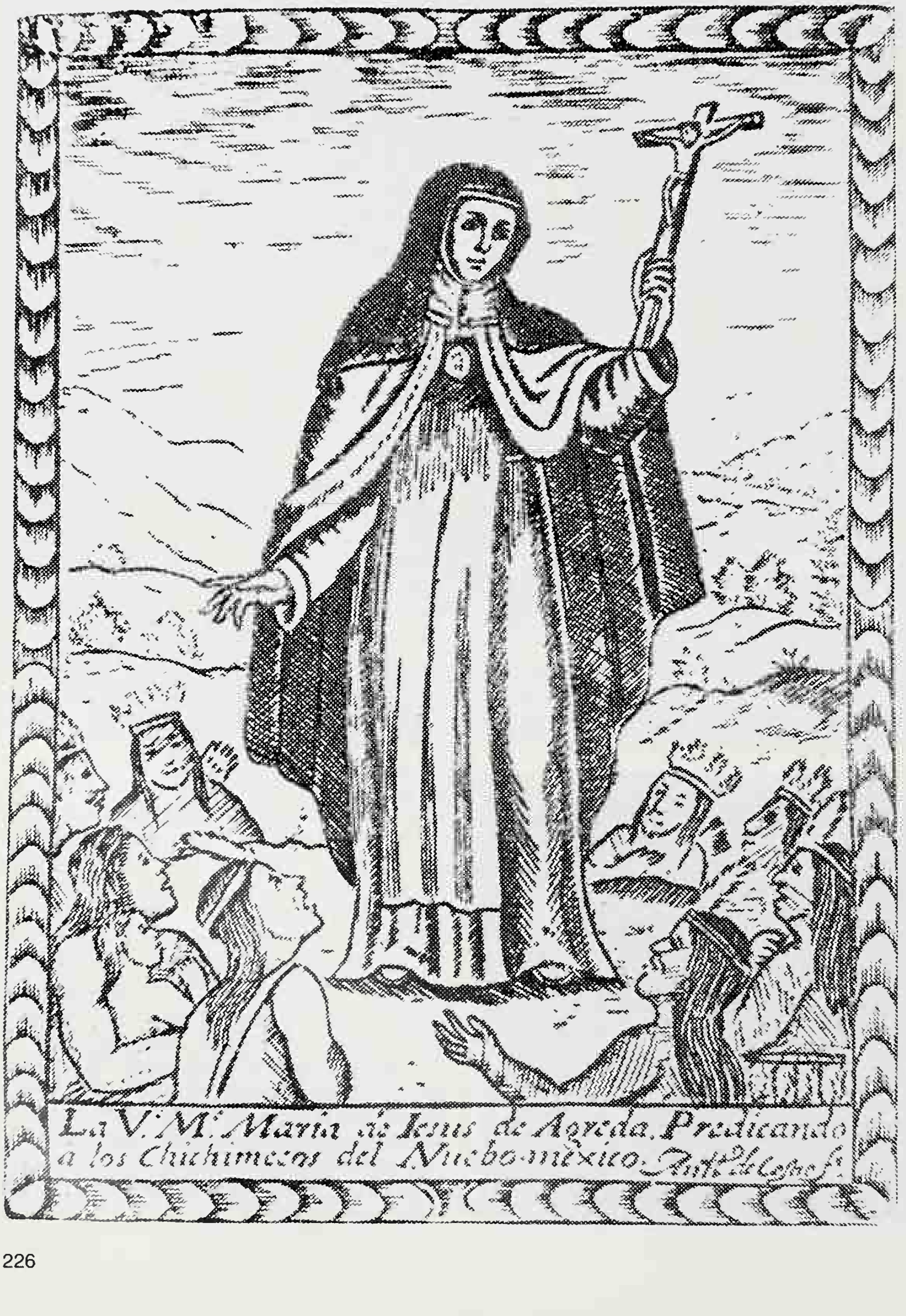
Mary of Agreda, the 17th-century Spanish nun to whom the Virgin Mary dictated her autobiography in a series of visions (it was published as *The Mystical City of God* in 1670), spent her life from adolescence on in the convent of the Conceptionist Clares (in her home-town of Agreda in Castile) of which she eventually became abbess. In her early years there she had several levitation experiences, witnessed by others.

In 1626 the Archbishop of New Mexico received a letter from Spain informing him that Sister Maria claimed to have been teaching Christianity to the American Indians in remote areas of his diocese. To the astonishment of the Franciscan friars at the missions there, the story seemed to be confirmed by a visiting party of Jumano Indians, whose description of a young woman in the blue mantle of the Clares, who had been visiting them frequently, fitted that of Sister Maria.

When two friars visited the Jumanos on their home ground (in what is now western Texas) to check, they were greeted by a procession carrying a cross garlanded with flowers. The Jumanos said the lady in blue had arranged all this and had herself helped to decorate the cross. The friars reported that the nun had been seen by many Indians and had preached to them in their own language.

The story created considerable excitement, though Sister Mary herself became embarrassed by it and did her best to play it down. She said she had no evidence that it was her earthly body which had somehow been to America. Indeed she thought it unlikely, but she had certainly experienced visions of being there and talking to the Indians in Castilian, which she said they seemed to understand without difficulty. She suggested that perhaps angels had assumed her physical form in New Mexico. Legends about a mysterious white 'lady in blue', flourished in Texas and the American South-West for many years afterwards.

One current approach to the phenomenon suggests that it is the astral body that is seen in these cases (see ASTRAL BODY). A related idea is that a person may have a double, an exact replica of the 'real' person, which is sometimes reported as looking just as solid as the original (see DOUBLE). Bilocation in the full sense, however – the same physical body present in two places simultaneously – is difficult to accept, being contrary to common experience and common sense.


La V. M. Maria de Jesus de Agreda, Predicando
a los Chichimecas del Nuebo-mèxico.

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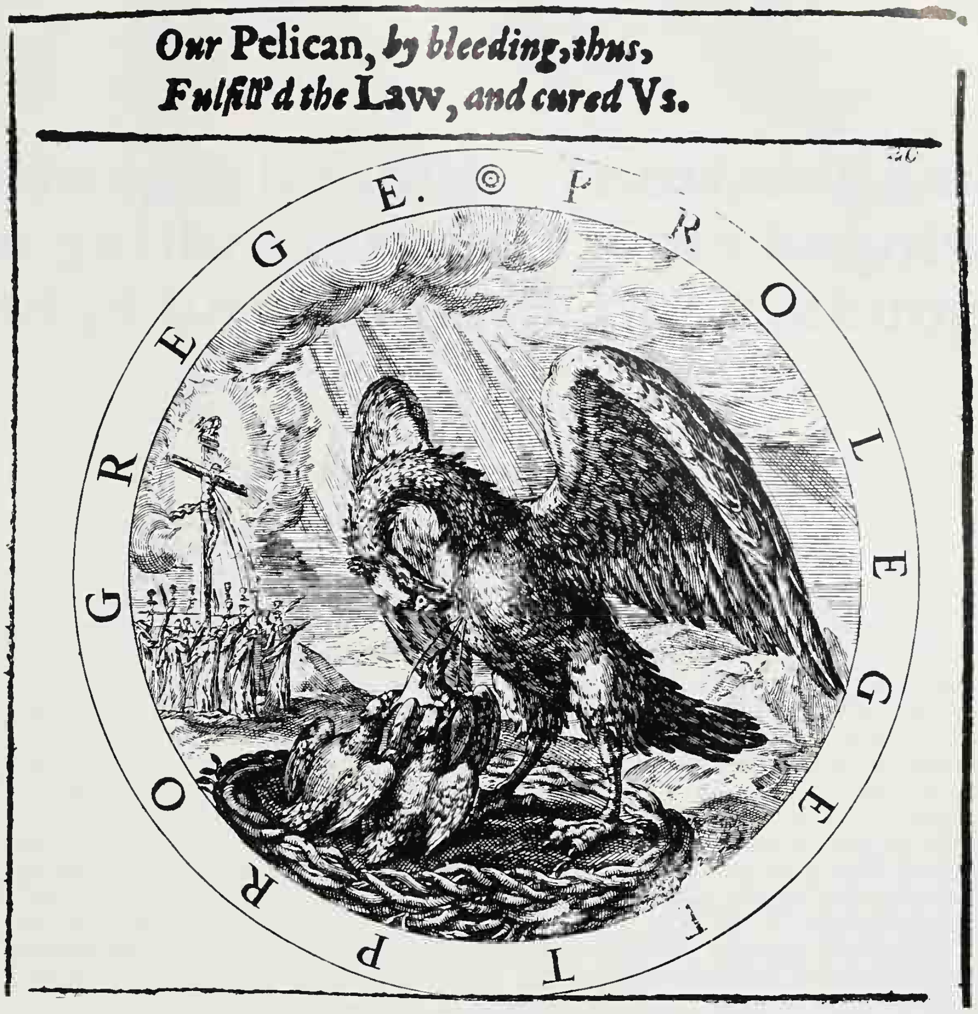
Mary of Agreda preached to the Indians of New Mexico while known to be in her convent in Spain: woodcut of 1730


Our Pelican, by bleeding, thus,
Fulfill'd the Law, and cured Vs.
PRO LEGE ET PRO GREGE.

Mansell Collection

irds play an important part in folklore and rimitive magic, and one of the earliest human orks of art portrays a man apparently nasquerading as a bird. Symbols of power, they ave become associated with gods and other acred figures in a variety of ways. *Above* 'A elican in her piety': in Christian art the pelican evotedly feeding her young with her own blood as a symbol of charity, and of Jesus Christ ho gave his life for mankind

BIRDS

From Heaven or Near it

en have always envied the birds their ability fly, which brought them into contact with the y powers and the gods. The curious colouring behaviour of some birds – the blackcock's nce, the curlew's yellow eye, the hoopoe's athered crest – has also given them super-tural associations

AN'S INTEREST IN BIRDS throughout the es has been partly due to the similarities hich he noted between their behaviour and s own, and partly to what he considered eir superiority to himself in some respects. ecause, like himself, they go on two legs, nstruct homes, sing, dance and show off, an has felt an affinity with the birds but he as also felt amazement and envy at their ility to fly. And so he has viewed them nbivalently, as in some respects like men, others like gods. This ambivalence is aracteristic of much bird mythology and lklore, and has often found expression in forts by men to identify themselves with rds by copying their appearance and haviour.

One of the earliest human works of art pparently shows a man masquerading as a ird. It is a scene painted during the Old tone Age in the cave of Lascaux in France. human figure, wearing a bird mask, is epicted falling backwards. Beside the man a post or stake on which a bird perches or, iore probably, a model wooden bird is set. his lively scene has been thought to represent either the soul as a bird or a shaman trance but, whatever its significance, the ainting shows that at this period birds layed an important role in ritual and belief. is on a rock cornice in a narrow vertical ssure in the floor of the cave. Other pictures f birds in the caves of southern France and orthern Spain are also usually engraved in omparatively inaccessible situations, which uggests that for Stone Age man these representations possessed a special and secret significance.

A good deal of oral folklore, particularly concerning animals and birds in the industrialized West, is the residue of more serious beliefs which have disintegrated or decayed. For example, the belief still current in America that the drumming noise of a woodpecker betokens rain is an isolated scrap of information practically devoid of significance until viewed in the context of the ancient beliefs and rituals of which it is the last evidence surviving in the countryside. Early man probably thought that the woodpecker was a bringer of thunder, and so it came to be associated with rain and storms.

The belief that an egg was involved in the process by which the universe came into existence is very ancient. Theories of this kind deal with the problem of which came first, the hen or the egg, and may be regarded as man's attempt, consciously or subconsciously, to avoid an infinite regress.

The Original Egg

According to one Egyptian myth the god Khnum made the cosmic egg from the mud of the Nile. According to another, the sun was the egg of 'the great cackler', a goose. About 600 BC the Cretan writer Epimenides mentioned the world-egg and this concept spread to Greece.

There are other myths in which supernatural persons or beings emerged from eggs: for example, the Peruvian tradition that the orders of society came from eggs of

Imagination fashioned gigantic winged creatures controlling or causing clouds, wind, thunder and lightning

different metals, golden for the chiefs, silver for the nobles, copper for the common people. Hawaii is said to have emerged from the sea when a deity descended and laid an egg. The number of such myths and the huge area over which they have been recorded indicates that before written history began, man was so impressed by the remarkable powers of birds that he associated them with supernatural events, including the creation of the universe.

Right up to our own time eggs have aroused amazement and awe, for the process by which what looks like a large rounded pebble produces a living creature is worthy of wonder (see EGG).

The creation myths in which the nest-building of birds is involved show that this procedure early intrigued mankind (and inspection of nests may have influenced man's first attempts at basketwork and pottery). An amphibious creature, often a bird, is said to have brought the earth into being by fetching up mud from the water. This myth is found in India, is widespread in northern Asia and occurs in sufficiently similar form in North America to suggest that it spread across the Bering Strait. Among the Chippewa Indians the story was that various mammals tried to bring up mud but only the diver bird succeeded. Iroquois myth speaks of the tribal ancestress descending from the sky and amphibious creatures bringing up mud to make an island on which she could live. The Mandan Indians believed that two pigeons flew back and forth across the water until a blade of grass appeared and dry land followed, a tale vaguely reminiscent of the story of Noah's Ark.

The Beat of Heavenly Wings

Of all flying creatures birds are the most conspicuous and impressive. As some soar into the heavens until they disappear from sight, they were regarded as having a close relationship to the sky powers, the sun and the heavenly bodies, the weather powers and the gods dwelling on high. These powers might be thought of as appearing in bird form, or it might be believed that a man could get in touch with them by transforming himself, using magical means, into bird form.

In those regions where there are pronounced seasonal changes, there is an obvious correlation between increasing temperature, day-length and the path of the sun, on the one hand, and the growth of vegetation and the breeding of animals on the other. As a result, the sun and those creatures believed to be closely associated with it were viewed with particular awe. The eagle's soaring flight, mounting in a huge spiral, gave it solar affinities. Zeus, the Greek supreme god, was said to have appeared as an eagle and also as a swan, another large, powerful and high-flying bird which has retained importance in mankind's beliefs to the present day.

Other large birds, such as vultures, became linked with this complex of ideas and imagination fashioned gigantic winged creatures controlling or causing clouds, wind, thunder and lightning. The Simurgh of the Persians had wings like an immense rain-bearing cloud, while the Indian Garuda, with the head and wings of an eagle and the body and legs of a man, typified the wind. In the account of the Roc in the *Arabian Nights* which swoops into the Valley of Snakes to retrieve lumps of meat to which diamonds adhere (and are thus secured by crafty men) the magico-religious bird has become a storybook character, but originally the great bird gripping a snake represented the victory of the beneficent fertility-bringing powers over the evil forces of drought and sterility.

As a bird so naturally became the symbol of higher power, winged creatures became associated with gods and other sacred figures in various ways, sometimes as vehicles of humanized representations. Zeus in later Greek art rides an eagle, Aphrodite is borne by a goose and Apollo is conveyed in a swan-drawn chariot. Asian divinities are commonly portrayed mounted on large birds. Skanda, the Indo-Chinese warrior god rides a peacock; the Hindu god of love, Kama, rides a parrot, a bird with erotic associations.

Messengers of the gods are often winged. Mercury has diminutive symbolical wings attached to his heels and in Christian art angels have birds' wings. Evil powers and emissaries may also be winged but in the West they are sometimes associated with darkness by being equipped with bats' wings. In Christian art the Holy Spirit is commonly depicted as a dove because of the reference in the story of Christ's baptism: 'And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove' (Matthew, chapter 3).

If the heavenly powers may visit men in the likeness of birds, men can also visit the gods by pretending to be birds. This belie finds its fullest expression among those Siberian tribes in which the shaman in trance utters bird calls and flaps his arms like wings.

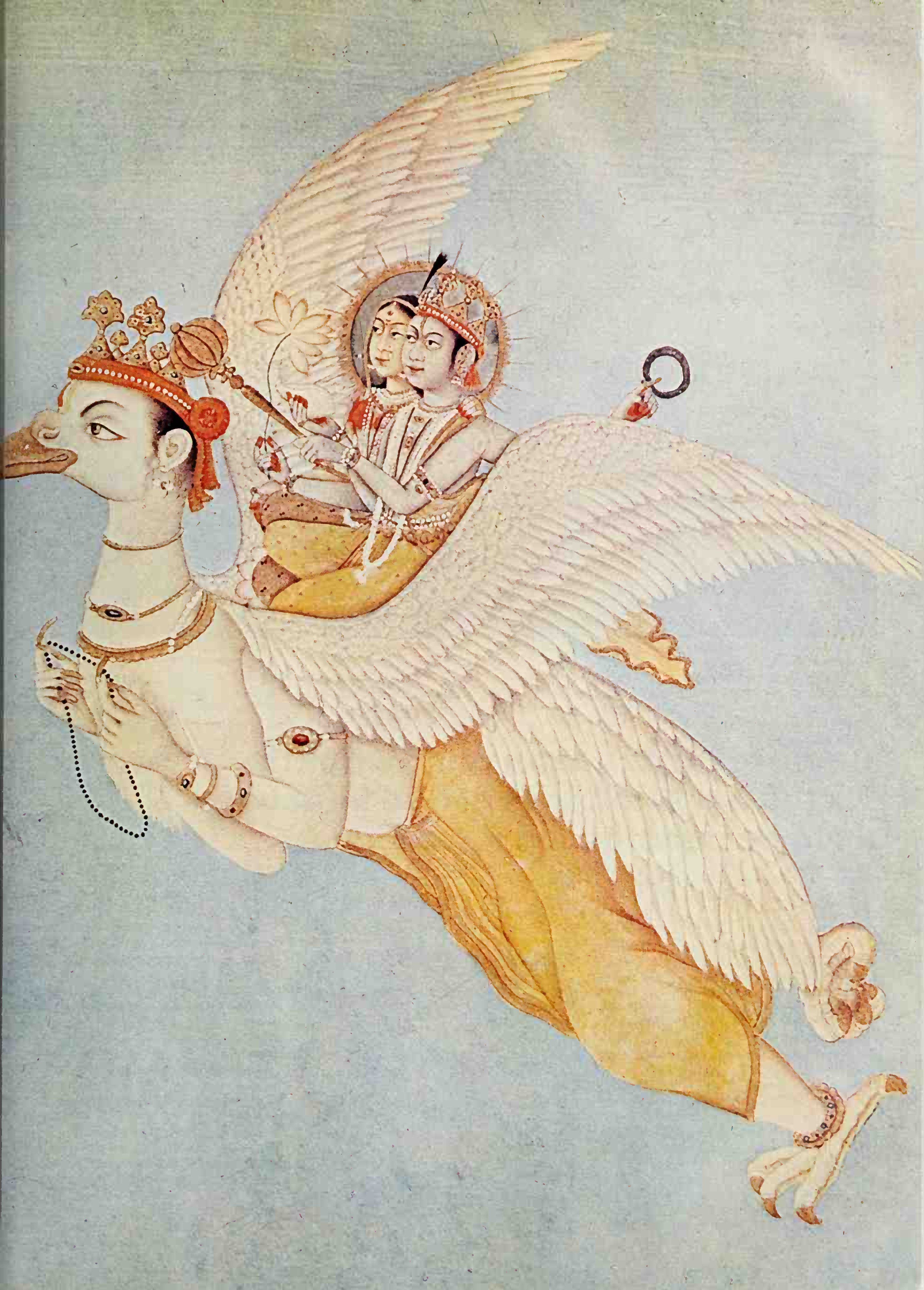
It is widely believed that the soul may depart from the body, either temporarily during life or permanently after death, in the form of a bird. This notion is not a thing o the past, nor is it confined to peoples in a low state of culture. It still persists, or did until recently, around the coasts of the British Isles where it is said that seagulls are the souls of drowned seamen. There are various related beliefs. In ancient Mesopotamia the dead were described as existing in the form of birds in the underworld; among the Bantu in Africa there is a belief that the spirit of a murdered man haunts his killer as a bird, and in Germany ravens were though to be damned souls or the steeds on which witches rode.

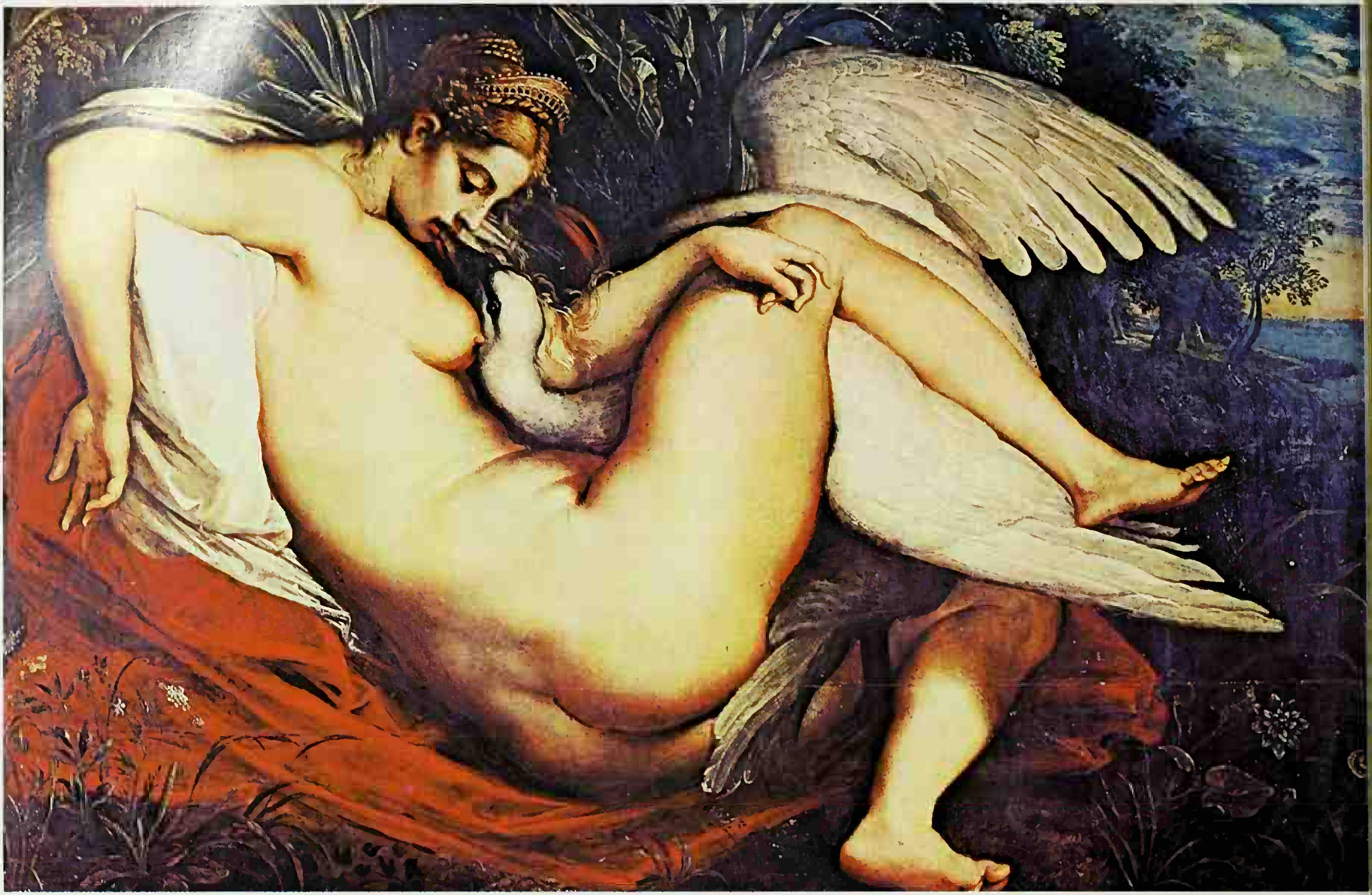
The Language of Birds

Apart from man, birds are the most vocal o all animals and as a group far surpass him in variety of utterance. Their calls and songs constitute a language of signals, limited bu efficient. A very widespread belief, common in folktales, is that in certain circumstances men can understand the speech of birds o other animals, or that birds can understand human language. Folklore tells of occasiona persons born with this gift but more often i is acquired by some device such as eating snake's flesh or magical herbs. In Iceland a hawk's tongue was carried under the tongue of the person seeking this power.

The concepts of the bird which brings news, for example in the Flood myths, and the bird which brings intelligible voca messages are sometimes linked. Odin had two ravens which roved around the world to pry into events and gather news. They returned to perch on his shoulders and

Garuda, king of the birds, symbol of the wind, and devourer of evil men, carries the Hindu god Vishnu and his wife Lakshmi through the sky in their Krishna and Radha incarnations Venerated as Vishnu's charger, Garuda has the beak, talons and wings of an eagle, and the body and limbs of a man: 18th century painting in the Islamic Museum, Berlin





A white bird is a portent of death, for pure white birds are so unusual as to be considered uncanny

whisper what they had learned into his ear. In folktales, overhearing the conversation of birds sometimes provides the hero with valuable clues. In the Scottish ballad *The Twa Corbies* a person 'walking all alone' overhears the corbies (crows) discussing their grisly feast on the body of a dead knight. The 'Bird of Truth' motif is also widely known. The theme is that a bird reveals important information, for example, the identity of a traitor.

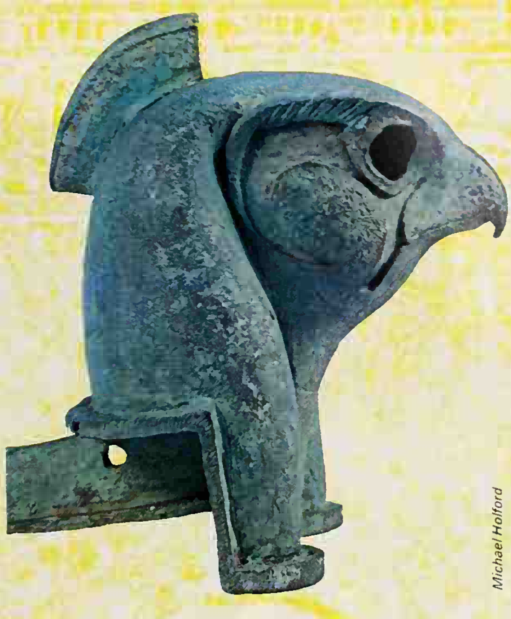
Connected with these ideas is the belief that birds may serve as oracles or guides, as in augury (see AUGURY). The belief lives on in the Shropshire superstition that to see a magpie going widdershins (to the left) is unlucky, and in the tradition in the Faroes that a girl can foretell where her future husband will come from by throwing stones at a crow and observing in which direction it flies. The Masai believe that if a grey woodpecker is heard on the right it is a good omen, but if heard on the left it betokens evil, while if heard behind a traveller it indicates that he will have a favourable reception.

In some places in the United States a bird entering a house is auspicious, unless it is a white bird, in which case it is a portent of death, for pure white birds are so unusual as to be considered uncanny. The calls of birds with sinister associations, such as owls, tend to be feared. On the other hand, in most of Europe the first calls of the cuckoo are welcomed as heralding spring.

Birds, being regarded as messengers of higher powers or as possessors of secret knowledge, were said to have led people to the site on which to found a new city. Similarly a bird might indicate to a saint the location for a hermitage or monastery. The diver was supposed to be a guide to the otherworld. According to legends, obliging birds have helped individuals in various ways, from feeding children to rescuing them from the sea, bringing food to prophets and saints, or carrying away poisoned food.

The Bringers of Spring

The annual appearances and disappearances of birds have long aroused mystification. Their return in spring inspired rejoicing, and linked some birds, especially larger species such as the goose and crane, with the sun. Apparently such birds were thought



Michael Holford

arge, powerful birds like the vulture and ne swan are often associated with powerful eities. *Left* In Greek mythology Leda bore hildren to Zeus who ravished her in the form f a swan. Helen of Troy, one of the children, as born from an egg laid and hatched by Leda: *eda and the Swan* by Rubens *Above* The falcon as worshipped in Egypt from prehistoric times nd, soaring high in the sky, was identified ith the great sky god Horus: bronze falcon's ead, dating from after 850 BC *Below* The ulture was associated with Nekhebet, a rotective goddess of Upper Egypt who is ften shown in this form hovering over the haraoh's head: from a wall relief at Karnak

f not merely as heralding spring but, in a ractical sense as emissaries of the gods, as ringing it. They were sometimes greeted ith ceremonies. Siberian tribes honoured ne arriving geese ritually by preparing an rtificial nest, and on the island of Rhodes ne swallow was welcomed with a song. The isappearance of birds in the autumn aroused peculation and disquiet. It was said of some irds that they visited the land of the dead.

ed Beak and Yellow Eye

he courtship and other social displays of irds are often conspicuous and sometimes pectacular, especially when the birds con- erned are adorned with brilliantly coloured lumes or perform in groups. Primitive eoples assumed, on seeing a number of irds engaged in a social performance, such s cranes, the blackcock and the cock of the ock, that they were enacting a magical cere- nony. Regarding birds as wiser than them- elves in some respects, they copied them, elieving that such dances ushered in the ertility of spring or brought rain. The Hopi f the south-western United States perform n eagle rain dance and the Taruhumare ndians of Mexico imitate turkeys in their ain-making ceremony. In the Alpine *Schuh- latter* dance the male dancers wear black- ock feathers in their hats and gambol in pposing pairs as blackcock do at the *lek*, or ourting arena. It is probable that the dance rose in imitation of the birds. In ancient Crete there was a crane dance, as there is n modern Japan, and in Yugoslavia on Shrove Tuesday boys perform a fertility lance, imitating a cock.

The folklore of many birds has been deter- nined or influenced by their colouring. Red being the colour of fire, lightning and blood, birds with conspicuous red markings are sometimes connected with one or more of these. The cock crossbill's red crown and its twisted bill inspired the legend that the bird acquired these characteristics through its efforts to remove the nails from Christ's Cross. And the American robin's red breast comes, says a tale, from Christ's blood when the bird pulled thorns from his Crown.

In antiquity the colour yellow was associated with jaundice and consequently also with its cure, and it was supposed that if a patient fixed his gaze on the large, staring yellow eye of the stone curlew the disease would be transferred to the bird. Black birds, such as crows, have often been connected with the Devil or witchcraft as black has commonly been associated with evil magic and wickedness.

Comparatively few birds are pure white, although albinos occur in some species. Being exceptional, they are regarded as uncanny and can awaken fear. Pied birds were viewed with disquiet, because people could not decide whether they were good or evil. The folklore of these birds, such as the magpie and the pied wagtail, reflects this ambivalent reaction. The exception to this attitude was the oyster-catcher which was regarded as benevolent. Although pied, this bird appears to be white when it is in the air, and in the Hebrides it was thought to look, in flight, like a white cross. This distinction was said to have been bestowed upon the oyster-catcher because it concealed Christ from his enemies by piling seaweed over him.

Michael Holford

The Hoopoe's Crown

Folktales provide explanations for the unaccountable physical or behavioral peculiarities of animals. Tales of the type, 'How the . . . got its . . .', are found all over the world. Probably they are told to entertain rather than explain. For example, an Arabic tale explains that the swallow acquired its forked tail when the serpent of evil took a bite out of it.

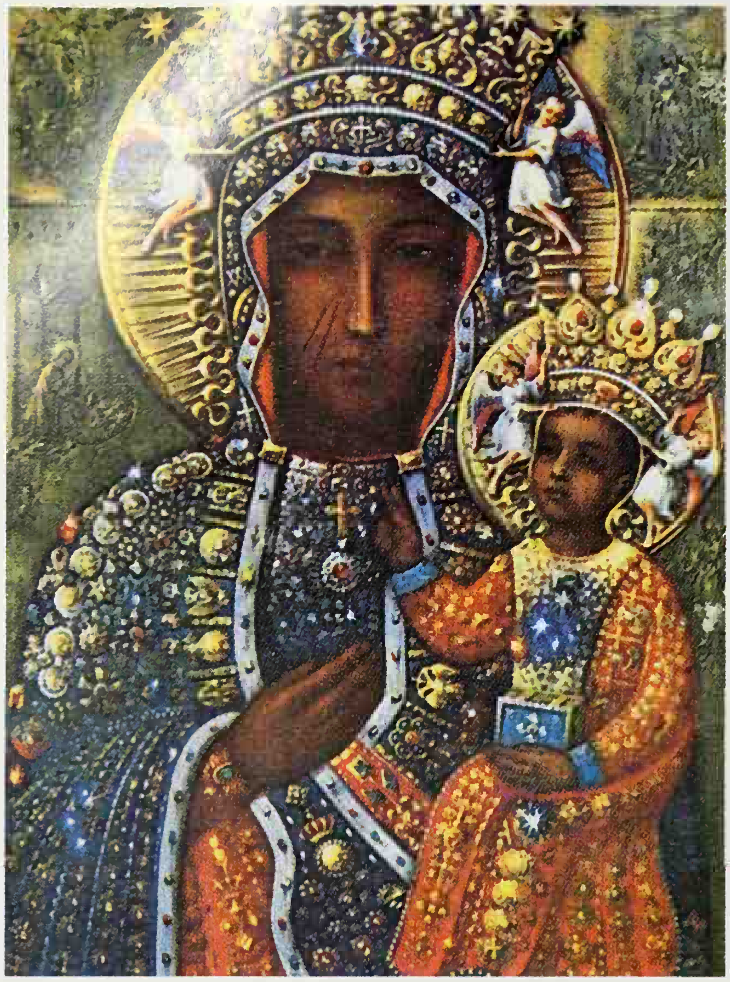
The hoopoe's crest, a striking physical characteristic, was linked with the rays of the sun and in folktales the hoopoe appears as a solar bird. Birds' crests were used as symbols of royalty and the hoopoe, because of its distinguishing mark, also became linked with legends about kings. Both associations are found in an Arab legend about Solomon, which explains how the crest was given to the hoopoe. When Solomon was travelling on a magic carpet, hoopoes sheltered him from the sun. Solomon offered to reward them but they foolishly asked to be given golden crowns. When they were persecuted for the gold, the hoopoes implored Solomon to have pity on them so he changed their crowns for feathered crests. The goldcrest, peacock and crested lark are other species with ornamental crowns or crests associated with royalty.

When birds are not known to breed in an area where they are usually to be found, stories are told to explain the absence of nests. The fable that the barnacle goose is hatched from shellfish could not have persisted for centuries had not the breeding grounds of the birds in the Arctic long remained unknown. Similarly when a bird's shape seems inadequate to account for its behaviour odd explanations are concocted. Because the quail, which is a skulking bird when seen in its nesting habitat, seemed incapable of sustained flight over the sea, the belief arose that it rode on the back of the crane. The osprey's ability to catch fish by plunging into the water, seemed extraordinary, and it was supposed that this bird of prey had the power to fascinate fish.

(See also articles on individual birds.)

EDWARD A. ARMSTRONG

FURTHER READING: E. A. Armstrong, *The Folklore of Birds* (Dover, 1969). See also E. Ingersoll, *Birds in Legend, Fable and Folklore* (Gale, 1968) and W. Harter, *Birds: In Fact and Legend* (Sterling, 1979).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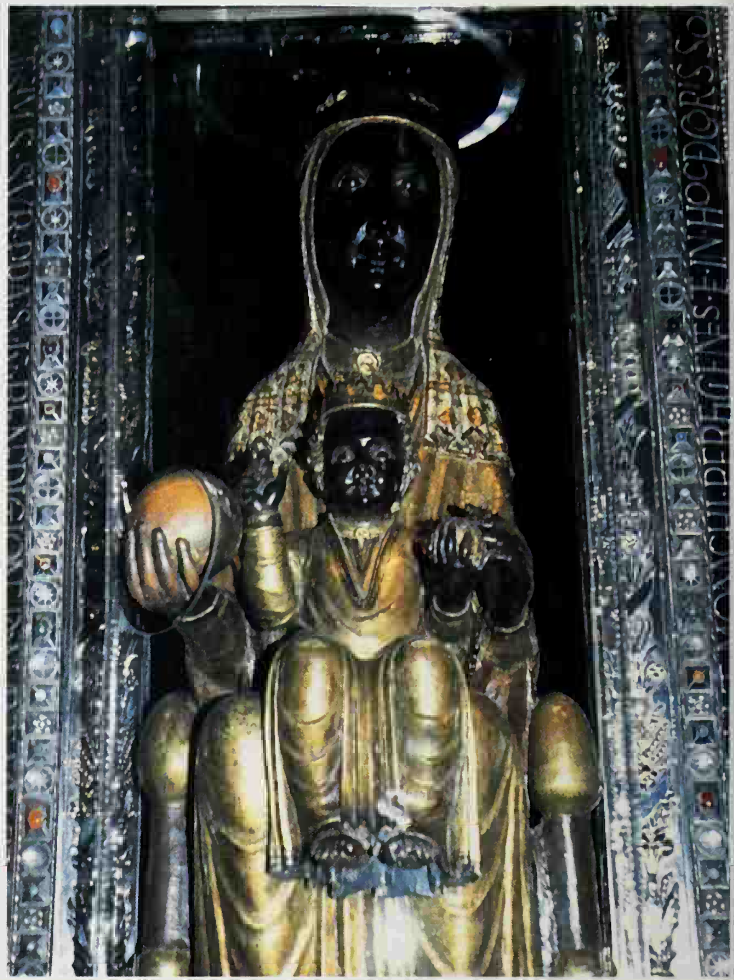
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Figures of the black Madonna and Child can be discovered – often in subterranean or semi-subterranean chapels – in many parts of Europe. Two black Madonnas from widely separated sites *Left* At the monastery in Montserrat, Spain *Right* The black Madonna in the ancient monastery of Jasna Gora, near Czestochowa in Poland, was elected Queen of the country in 1656

BLACK MADONNAS

DEEP IN A SUBTERRANEAN crypt below the altar of the church of Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, at the mouth of the Rhône in southern France, stands a statue that the gypsies call 'Sara la Kali', or Sarah the black. Local legend tells how the three Marys – Mary-Jacobé, the mother of James the Less, Mary-Salome and Mary Magdalene – were driven from Palestine and took a boat, landing at the mouth of the great river. The alleged remains of Mary-Jacobé and Mary-Salome are revered in the church above, and it seems probable that the black statue represents Mary Magdalene, who became confused at some point in history with Sarah the Egyptian, due to the figure's dark complexion.

Blessing the Waves

Each year on 24 May, the eve of the feast of the three Marys, gypsies who have come from far and wide take the statue of their 'Saint Sara', dressed in layer after layer of rich cloaks that they have specially made for her, to bless the waves of the Mediterranean from which she came.

There is evidence that the island sanctuary amid the marshes of the Rhône delta was a sacred place well before Christian times, and this cult of Mary Magdalene raises some interesting speculations.

All across Europe (and also at places in Mexico where the cult has been adopted), examples can be found of an unexpected, and at first encounter inexplicable, phenomenon: statues and icons of the Madonna and Child, whose features are not the usual rosy pink, but black. Many are also dressed in an unusual way, in a richly-decorated conical-shaped gown that completely hides the form of the body, and from which the child's head emerges like that of a tiny doll.

Some of these are still to be found in semi-subterranean cathedral side-chapels, and records indicate that many were originally situated in crypts. At Chartres, for instance, until late into the 18th century, pilgrims who had heard mass in the cathedral were subsequently led through a passageway into an ancient subterranean chapel where they made their devotions to *Notre Dame de Sous-Terre* – 'Our Lady of the Underworld' – an ebony Madonna and Child. They were then blessed with water drawn from an underground spring, which they were also permitted to drink, and led through another subterranean passage before emerging into the daylight. The original statue was destroyed during the French Revolution, but has been replaced in a side-chapel by a similar figure, the Virgin of the Pillar.

At Montserrat in Spain, prayers to a Madonna similar to that at Chartres are believed to avert sterility in marriage. The revered black Madonna in the Polish monastery of Jasna Gora near Czestochowa was proclaimed Queen of Poland in 1656. At Crotone in southern Italy (where there was originally a temple dedicated to Hera Lacinia, a Roman goddess who protected women in childbirth) a black Madonna is carried by sea, on the second Sunday in May, in a procession of torch-lit fishing boats. It is generally accepted that many aspects of the Marian cult result from identification of the Virgin Mary with the Great Mother of the pagan Mediterranean religions, who was known as 'queen of heaven' and 'star of the sea' (see MOTHER GODDESS). But why are the figures black?

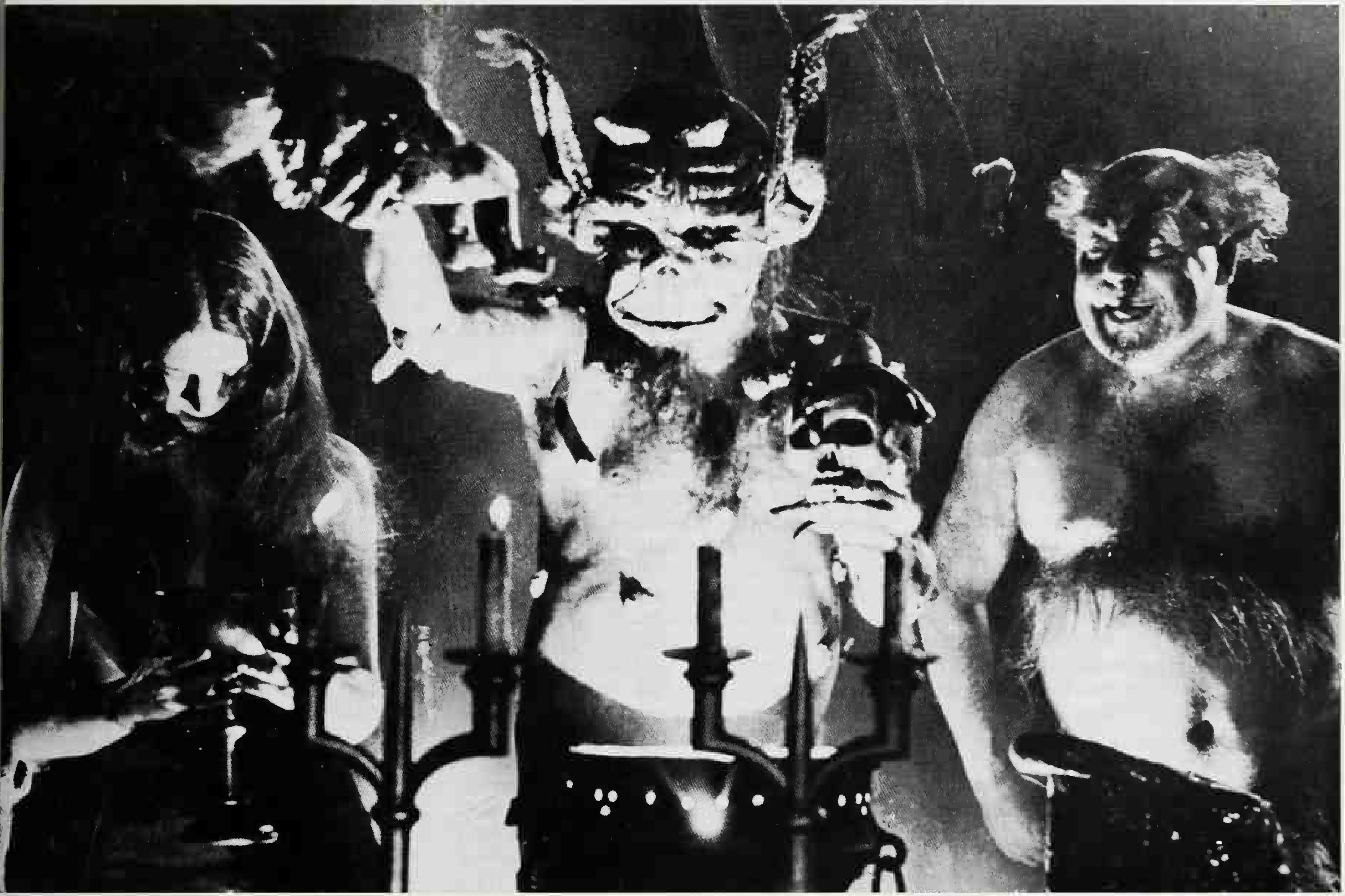
Dual Aspects

The explanation that has been advanced is that the necessarily immaculate qualities of the Virgin Mary did not fully accord with the earthier and ambivalent nature of the pagan goddesses, and that those who paid their devotions to the idealised female figure felt the need for a second figure – black to the Virgin's blue-and-white purity – to represent the other aspect of this duality. A personage who answered these requirements – and yet had the approval of the Church – was Mary Magdalene, the sinner sanctified by the privilege of having been the first to observe the resurrection of Christ (see JESUS CHRIST).

hat are the methods of black magic? Is there I ifference between a black magician and a witch, r between black magic and white?

BLACK MAGIC

AGIC ATTEMPTS TO make use of mysterious orces which most people cannot control or o not believe in. A black magician is one ho does this for evil purposes. Power is he black magician's guiding light. It is the ope of obtaining limitless power which purs him on, and the exercise of power hich he enjoys. He exalts dominance, cru-lty, hatred, lust, all fierce and hard emo-ions, while he scorns kindness, humility, ympathy and self-sacrifice. He often takes double-edged attitude to his own activities, convincing himself that his intention to kill or terrify is the highest good, while simultaneously wriggling with glee at his own delicious evilness.



In a modern witch ceremony, the High Priestess breathes power along an 'umbilical cord' into a wine chalice, which will then be fertilized by the male (phallic) knives. The wine will be shared by the witches at a ritual feast.

British Film Archive

Black magicians exist today, as in the past, but they are few and far between. The number of people so dedicated to the total reversal of the accepted rules of the society they live in that they consistently practise evil magic is, and always has been, very small. But human reluctance to believe in a universe so disorderly, and so out of sympathy with man that important events can occur by mere chance, has caused all sorts of misfortunes, deaths, illnesses and accidents to be put down to hostile magic. And so the term 'black magic' includes both the practices of a limited number of deliberate sorcerers and the much wider field of illusory practices and powers attributed to non-existent ones.

The Left-Hand Path

Both in fact and in popular belief, black magic is intensely anti-social, rejecting all accepted values and proclaiming their opposites. This is why it is connected with things which are inverted, upside down or the wrong way round. In the Ozark hill country of the United States the ceremony of initiating a witch ends with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer backwards. In southern France in 1932 an American writer, W.B.Seabrook, found a witch-doll, pierced with pins and smeared with toad's blood, intended to kill the person it represented. Near it, resting on a Bible, was an inverted crucifix on which a toad had been crucified head downwards. Today, some of the people who dabble in Satanism wear inverted crosses.

Black magic is called 'the Left-Hand Path' because right-handedness is normal and left-handedness is reversal of the normal. Witches were accused of dancing widdershins, to the left, at their meetings. And the principal charge against witches in Europe was that they had leagued themselves with the Devil, the arch-enemy of God and man, the rebel against divine order.

The same connection between black magic and the reversal of accepted values appears outside the European tradition. Navaho Indians say that to obtain his power a black magician must murder one of his younger brothers or sisters. In the Congo the Logo and Keliko people say that witches walk about upside down. The night-dancing witches of the Kaguru in East Africa go about naked, walk on their hands, and turn their black skins white with ashes.

Black magicians, real or alleged, are sexually perverse and they love dirt. In Africa the Azande associate lesbianism with witchcraft. The Mandari of the Sudan say that wizards practise homosexuality, bestiality with cows and goats, and intercourse with immature girls. In Europe witches were accused of committing every conceivable sexual perversion, with each other and with demons, and the words 'filthy', 'lewd', and 'unnatural' appear constantly in descriptions of their behaviour. Aleister Crowley, a notorious modern black magician, performed perverse rituals with male and female partners, and took a marked interest in human excrement.

Incest and cannibalism are commonly associated with black magic, and so are unnatural relationships with animals. European witches were said to keep familiar spirits in animal form which sucked their blood: like Jane Bussey of Kent, accused in 1583 of keeping three imps: 'Pygine resembling a mole, Russell resembling a grey cat, and the other called Dunsott resembling a dun dog, with intent that she might enchant and bewitch men as beasts and other things'.

The Methods of Black Magic

The black magician's armoury is as various as his purposes. He may use his own inner powers; spirits, demons or forces outside himself; mimicry, words and gestures; 'weapons' like the magic wand or circle, and 'medicine'.

Evil 'medicines' can be herbs or plants, roots, parts of the bodies of animals or human beings, pieces of paper with words or symbols written on them, knots tied in string, stones or almost anything else. Whether they are actually harmful, like snake venom, or outwardly harmless but having sinister associations, like bat's blood, they are not usually expected to work by themselves. There must be a link between the charm and the victim. His nail clippings or hair, clothes he has worn or bedding he has slept in, are believed to retain a connection with him, so that what is done to them is done to him. Less tangible things, a man's name or his shadow or his footprint, are also linked with him and can be used against him. An 18th century French magical textbook, the *Grimorium Verum*, says that you can harm an enemy by driving into his footprint a nail from an old coffin, saying *Pater noster upto in terra*, which seems intended to mean 'Our father which art on earth', parodying the Lord's Prayer and appealing to the Devil. You hammer the nail well in with a stone and say, 'Cause harm to so-and-so until I remove you.'

If there is no natural link with the victim, the magician must create one. He may bury an evil charm in a path where his victim will walk over it, or he may hide it in his enemy's house. When the Roman general Germanicus died in 19 AD, under the floor and behind the walls of his room were found human bones, rotting bits of dead bodies and pieces of lead, the metal of death, with his name written on them.

The Weapon of Language

Language is one of the great magical weapons because of the belief that words, infused with the power of the magician's will, make what is stated in the words happen. In some societies, as among the Maori in New Zealand, the words which make a particular spell work must never be altered. The correct forms are handed down from magician to magician, for the words themselves have magical force. But more often a magician is free to vary his incantations and he experiments with them until he finds those which seem to work best.

Through mimicry, words and gestures the magician works up his own inner fury or hatred or lust to a frenzied pitch, and through them he externalizes his frenzy and directs it at his target. The sorcerers of the central Pacific islands list all the parts and organs of the victim's body, saying over and over again in a torrent of rage, 'I break, I twist, I burn, I destroy'. When a bone or a stick is pointed at a man to kill him, the magician jabs it in the air with an expression of violent hatred, and turns and twists it as if in the wound.

In the same way, a European black magician acts out hatred for his victim, stabbing the air with a sword or a knife and whipping or wounding an animal or another human being, filling his mind with images of blood and pain, and working himself into a state of frenzy in which, he believes, he draws into himself all the forces of violence and destruction in the universe. He becomes these forces; he masters them, and he launches them against his enemy with scarifying force.

To what extent a magician's magical power comes from inside himself or from outside is a matter which magicians themselves are often vague about. The European magical textbooks are mainly concerned with rituals for summoning up spirits and demons which will obey the magician's orders.

Quiche Indians in Guatemala say that a man who wants to become a witch sleeps in a cemetery for nine nights and prays to the Devil, from whom he can obtain power. In Africa the Nyoro black magicians send evil spirits to attack people and the Lele sorcerers force the spirits of dead babies to foretell the future.

When Magic Works

When magic works, as it sometimes does, it usually appears to be explicable in terms of its effects on the minds of the magician and his victim, without any necessity to assume the presence of mysterious outside forces. A black magician of dominating personality can have a terrifying effect, even on the sceptically inclined, and when a sorcerer puts a fatal spell on a man who believes in his power it is not unknown for the victim to fade away and die. But it is probably the belief which kills him, not the spell.

In European ritual magic a small group of magicians perform a long and exhausting ceremony in which they attempt to conjure up to visible appearance a spirit or occult power of some kind. During the ceremony they gradually whip themselves up into a state of intense excitement. They have a clear mental picture of the demon they expect to see, and often a drawing or painting of it. It is not very surprising if at the climax of the ceremony they actually see it, but the demon seems more likely to be a creation of their own minds than something existing independently.

Some anthropologists studying African beliefs have drawn a rough distinction between a sorcerer and a witch. A sorcerer uses 'medicine', plants, roots, nails, hair and the rest. A witch, on the other hand, possesses inner magical power and can injure a person by concentrating malice upon him. Anyone who takes the time and trouble can learn to become a sorcerer, but not everyone has the innate power possessed by a witch.

This distinction is not always clear in practice and is not accepted as generally true by all anthropologists. Certainly it does not fit the European tradition, in which both black magicians and witches are credited with innate power and both use noxious substances and potions. In Europe the distinction between them is based on the difference in their characteristic attitudes to the forces with which they deal. Broadly speaking, the black magician seeks to dominate and control occult powers, while the witch worships them. This is reflected in the fact that the majority of European black magicians have been men and the majority of witches women.

Black Magic and White

The distinction between black and white magic is simple enough in theory: a black magician works for evil ends and a white magician for good. But in practice the distinction is frequently blurred. For one thing, it rests in the eye of the beholder and very often white magic is what you work and black magic is what other people work. For another, a man who believes he has magical powers is likely, being human, to use them sometimes to help and sometimes to harm.

Among North American Indians the medicine-man who can cure a disease can also inflict it. A Papago Indian recalled a year in which 'we lynched a medicine-man. He had been killing people.' Similarly, modern witches and white magicians will usually admit their readiness to turn their powers against rival occultists who attack them.

For magicians themselves, magic is morally neutral. It works automatically, like a tap. If you turn the taps on in the bath, you get water. You may be filling the bath to wash the baby or to drown him, but your motives do not affect the water supply.

The most startling thing about the European grimoires or magical text books is their use of fervent and sincere prayers to God, asking his help in operations intended to kill people, to cause pain or to stir up hatred. One example from many is the long process in the *Grimoire of Honorius*, dating from the 17th century or earlier. It purports to have been written by a pope, and the magician who uses it should be a priest. It involves the slaughter of a lamb which is ritually identified with Christ as the Lamb of God, and it bristles with impassioned appeals to God and solemn sayings of Mass. But its purpose is to summon up the Devil.

The authors of the grimoires inherited an old magical tradition that the power of a god can be captured and 'turned on' like a tap, regardless of the magician's motives. They also inherited a deeper tradition still, that the true goal of the magician is to find and identify himself with an ultimate unity underlying and pervading all things. All things are grist to the magician's mill and all experiences are necessary to him. He must experience and master hatred as well as love, cruelty as well as mercy, evil as well as good. This is the path of the 'magus' and it is the magus perverted who makes the master black magician.

BLACK MASS

IT IS IMPORTANT to make a clear distinction between the Black Mass and the activities of witches as they were investigated by the Inquisition from the 13th century onward.

'Witchcraft', as it was identified , was in essence the survival of folk beliefs that were regarded as heretical by the Church, and was practised largely in peasant communities. The Black Mass, on the other hand, was supported by members of the moneyed classes, who could afford to pay for its performance, who believed in the teachings of established religion – and who therefore believed in the existence of evil entities that could be suborned to work against the power of God.

Since 'witchcraft' retained many elements of pre-Christian religion, it became a widespread, loosely-defined cult that might be practised fairly regularly. But the Black Mass was seldom performed more than once or twice for any individual, and most of its practitioners were at the same time members of the established Church.

However, each kind of practice, having been condemned as sacrilegious, gradually adopted aspects of the other's ritual – while the Church, and most particularly the Dominican inquisitors, who regarded all equally as heretics, attributed the same perversions to both.

The Obscene Goat

The hairy goat, for instance (see GOAT), is clearly a survival of the bucolic rites of Dionysus (see DIONYSUS). It took the Church a long time to identify it with the Devil, but once this was done we soon find accounts of a giant goat squatting obscenely on the altar during the Black Mass, and this idea has passed into modern folklore. Conversely, the country witches were accused of the same dualist beliefs that lay behind the practice of the Black Mass.

The Black Masses said by the abbé Guibourg in the house of La Voisin have been reported in greater detail than any other, and indeed the ceremony seems to have been practised more widely in France than in any other country. However, over the past six centuries, there have been many occasions on which the powers of evil have been deliberately invoked.

In 1303 the bishop of Coventry was accused before the Pope of doing homage to the Devil; and in 1324 Lady Alice Kyteler was accused in Ireland of ritual witchcraft, and 'in rifeling the closet of the ladie, they found a Wafer of sacramentall bread, having the divels name stamped thereon in stead of Jesus Christ'.

The Mass of St Secaire

J.F.Bladé, in his book *Contes de Gascogne*, gives details of the Mass of St Secaire, which (it is said) was still performed occasionally in the Basque country within living memory. Intended to bring about the wasting and death of its victim, the mass is of a kind that was condemned by the council of Toledo as early as the 9th century.

The celebrant enters a disused church at 11pm, so timing the ceremony that it ends on the stroke of midnight. His server should be a woman with whom he has copulated. Prayers are said backward, the Host is black and triangular, and the chalice contains water from a well in which an unbaptised child has been drowned.

A similar, but more horrific, mass was said to have been held by Catherine de Medicis in January 1574 in an attempt to save the life of her son Charles IX, King of France. The Host was black and white, and the chalice contained human blood. The blood was that of a young boy, whose head was cut off after he had taken communion of the white part of the Host, the black being retained for the subsequent ceremonies of the mass.

After the trial of La Voisin, and of the many corrupt priests associated with her, the Black Mass became little more than a rumour in France. Only late in the 19th century, following a revival of interest in occult matters that began in France but soon spread to most of the countries of the western world, did highly-fanciful accounts begin to appear.

The first to attract wide attention was the novel by H.-K. Huysmans, *La-Bas* (*Down There*, 1891), in which the hero, Durtal, attends a Black Mass in the Vaugirard district on the southwest side of Paris. It was later claimed that Huysmans had based his account upon his personal experiences.

However, the appearance the following year of an even more sensational work, *The Devil in the 19th Century*, which claimed to be factual, reinforces the suspicion that Huysmans's description was the product of a fevered imagination. This latter book was the work of 'Dr Bataille' a pseudonym for a former ship's doctor named Charles Hacks; he was inspired by an extraordinary character named Gabriel Jogand-Pagès, whose life's ambition was no less than the destruction of the Roman Catholic church. Finally came Jules Bois's *Satanism and Magic* (1895), with its hysterical descriptions of Black Masses drawn largely from old witch-hunters' accounts.

Crowley's Rituals

In England, the 'wickedest man in the world' Aleister Crowley developed his own esoteric cult. He was accused of performing the Black Mass, but his own writings show that the ceremonies which he performed – although they had a strong sexual content – had little or no connection with the Catholic mass, in no matter how perverted a form. To this day, there are those who claim to celebrate Black Masses; but, with the steadily declining belief in the corporeal existence of the powers of darkness, these are little more than obscene play-acting.

(See also BASQUE WITCHCRAFT, CROWLEY, EUROPEAN WITCHCRAFT, etc).

FURTHER READING: H.T.F.Rhodes, *The Satanic Mass* (Rider, 1954); Montague Summers, *Geography of Witchcraft* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

The Black Ceremony

When the Paris chief of police, La Reynie, searched the premises of the abortionist La Voisin in 1679, he made a disquieting discovery. In a corner of the grounds, partly hidden by trees, stood a pavilion. Inside, its walls were hung with black, and at one end stood an altar, behind it a black curtain embroidered with a white cross. Black candles stood on the altar, which was covered with a black cloth; beneath the cloth was a mattress. La Voisin's daughter, Marguerite, eventually made a statement describing what occurred in a Black Mass held there in January 1678.

The woman at whose request the Black Mass was celebrated was Francoise Athenais de Mortemart, marquise de Montespan, one of king Louis XIV's mistresses. She believed that previous Black Masses had resulted in the defeat of her rival Louisa Frances de la Baume Le Blanc, duchesse de Vallière, and now she desperately needed to regain the affections of the king, who had fallen in love with Marie Angelique de Scoraille de Rousille.

Naked, she lay on the altar mattress, her legs spread wide, her head supported on a cushion and her arms outstretched. The priest, abbé Guibourg, and his clerk (a woman) were dressed in white vestments embroidered with black pinecones.

The priest approached the altar so that he stood between the marquise's legs, and laid the black cloth, the corporal, on her belly, placing a chalice upon it. Then he kissed her body, we may guess where, and commenced the ceremony, repeating the obscene kisses at moments throughout the mass.

Few details of the office are available, but the chalice and the Host were elevated in a parody of consecration, and then, we are told, 'the consecrated elements were subjected to manipulations of a very gross and obscene character'.

Finally a young child was sacrificed, and its blood mixed with the contents of the chalice, and the offering made with the words:

'Astaroth, Asmodeus, I beg you to accept the sacrifice of this child that we now offer to you, so that we may receive the things that we ask.'

It is possible, of course, that the child was obtained by abortion: La Voisin confessed to having consigned two thousand bodies of unwanted children to the flames of her furnace. Among the women known to have visited her house were Anne-Marie Mancini, duchesse de Bouillon; Marie-Louise of Luxembourg, of whom it was said that she was 'as ugly as she was loose'; Marie-Louise Pot de Rhodes, duchesse de Duras; and Olympe Mancini, comtesse de Soissons, who was strongly suspected of having poisoned her husband, and was another of the king's mistresses.

It is not known whether these women also took part in the Black Mass, or whether they had attended La Voisin's house to obtain abortions, or potions and poisons for the fulfilment of their sexual desires.

GOING TO HEAR
MUHAMMAD
SPEAK
SEPERATION, SOME OF THIS EARTH FOR US OR DEATH!

Camera Press London

Women members of the Black Muslim movement on their way by bus to hear thei leader, Elijah Muhammad

BLACK MUSLIMS

The Nation of Islam

From obscure beginnings in 1913 as the Moorish Science Temple of America, the Black Muslim movement grew rapidly in the period after World War II, and at one time numbered more than 70,000 members

MORE PROPERLY REFERRED TO as 'the Nation of Islam', the Black Muslims of the United States are sharply differentiated from Muslims, whether in North America, Africa or elsewhere, who happen to be black. The latter adhere to traditional Islamic beliefs and practices (see ISLAM), which are in essence the same whatever the ethnic origin of the individual Muslim. The former, now reduced to a small splinter group, are devotees of a quasi-religious movement which is held to offer the only hope of salvation for the 'Black Nation'.

The phrase 'Black Nation' is given a more general meaning than might be expected, and was specifically defined by the Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975) as being made up of 'the black, yellow, and red races'.

The Moorish Science Temple

The Nation of Islam had its origins in the small 'Moorish Science Temple of America' group founded in New Jersey in 1913 by Noble Drew Ali, an African-American who dabbled in an extraordinary variety of subjects, from astrology to comparative religion, and who claimed that North American blacks were simultaneously both 'Asiatic' and the descendants of enslaved Moroccans.

The movement was still extremely small, its core membership probably less than 100, when Noble Drew Ali died and a certain Wallace D. Fard (c1877-c1934), a pedlar of silks and cottons, assumed its leadership, allegedly claiming that the soul of Noble Drew Ali had transmigrated itself into his, Fard's, body.

Not surprisingly, the Moorish Science Temple of America then split into two, the 'Moors' – who still exist as a small group at the present day – adhering to the original teachings of Noble Drew Ali, and the disciples of Fard eventually becoming transformed into the Nation of Islam, the Black Muslims.

Mysteries

Wallace D. Fard was a mysterious and intriguing character. He used various names, including Professor Ford, Walli Farrad, Wallace Fard Muhammad and even Allah-God. By some this last appellation was understood literally, with Fard regarded as an avatar of God who would liberate what was termed 'The Lost-Found Nation of Islam in the West', i. e., the black population of America.

Fard's supposed origins were as diverse as his names; at various times he was said to be half Jamaican and half Syrian, a Muslim from Palestine, and a Meccan-born member of the same Arabian tribe as the Prophet Mohammed.

Whatever the truth of the matter may have been, there is no doubt that in the years 1930 through 1933 Fard's teachings evoked a small but enthusiastic response, particularly in Chicago, amongst recent black migrants from the south. These latter were excited by the message Fard gave – that he had a mission from Allah to bring freedom, justice and equality to his 'uncle' (the Black population of America) 'who were surrounded and robbed completely by the Caveman' – which meant the white majority.

Christianity, proclaimed Fard, was a lie; Allah was the One True God, and Allah would lead the black man out of 'the house of bondage'. Fard's use of this last phrase was a significant one, a clear indication o his syncretistic approach in the creation o his extremely unorthodox version of Islam For the phrase 'house of bondage' was derived from the Old Testament, not from the Holy Koran or any other Islamic source and referred to the captivity of Israel in Egypt.

A similar syncretism, a willingness to use material from a wide variety of sources which were more at less at variance with both the spirit and the letter of traditiona Islam, marked almost every aspect o Fard's construction of his quasi-religion.

Thus, for instance, he termed his Detroit headquarters a Temple of Islam, not a mosque, and in the course of the religious services held at that temple, founded in 1930, extracts from both the Old Testament and the Koran were read aloud. Similarly by the end of 1933 he had established the 'University of Islam' at which the subjects of study included astrology and a most unusual version of black American history seemingly derived from the eccentric teachings of Noble Drew Ali.

Fard's ultimate fate is as mysterious as his origins. Throughout 1933 his appearances became less and less frequent and in the following year he vanished, never to be seen again. According to one story he had been persuaded to offer himself as a human sacrifice, but there is no substantive evidence for this.

The disappearance of Fard caused a split in the small movement he had led. One group denied the divinity of their lost leader, declined in numbers, and eventually vanished into obscurity. The other, founded in Chicago in 1933 and originally numbering only nine people, six of them children, developed into the Nation of Islam, or Black Muslim Movement, which became so prominent in the United States in the period 1960-1975.

The Coming of Elijah

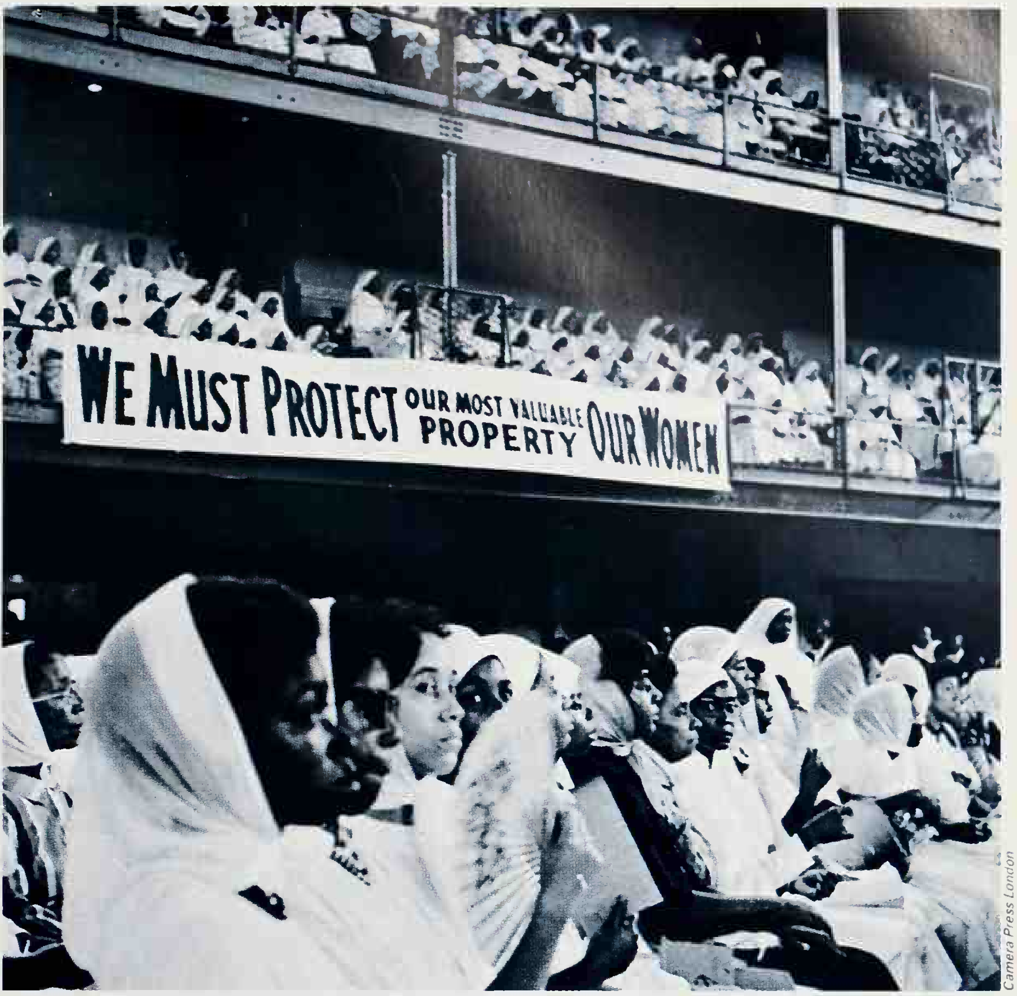
The tiny nine-member nucleus of the Black Muslim Movement was made up of Elijah Muhammad (born in Georgia in 1897 as Elijah Poole), his mother, his wife and his six children. The movement soon ceased to be a family affair and enjoyed a slow but steady growth throughout the 1930s, making most of its converts amongst the steadily growing band of poorly educated black migrants from the south to the urban industrial areas of the north.

The beliefs which were taught to converts, actual or potential, in the temples (later termed mosques) of the Nation of Islam were a curious mixture of Messianism, black nationalism, elements derived from orthodox Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Elijah Muhammad's personal faith.

Thus the vanished W. D. Fard was deified, prayed to, and referred to in extravagant terms and phrases which would have

African
Opinion
DEFEAT

Camera Press London


WE MUST PROTECT OUR MOST VALUABLE PROPERTY OUR WOMEN

Camera Press London

WE MUST CREATE OUR OWN EMPLOYMENT

Camera Press London

The Black Muslim movement was originally founded in the U.S.A. in the 1930s, during the years of the Depression. Its original leader, Wallace D. Fard, was a door-to-door fabric salesman in Detroit. After his mysterious disappearance in 1934, the organization was taken over by Elijah Muhammad, who developed its separatist philosophy, and recruited thousands of members.

Above left In their search for a non-slave identity, by which they rejected white values, the Black Muslims discovered a new inspiration in Africa. This Harlem citizen sports a miniature of the Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, and carries copies of African affairs magazines

Above right Black Muslim women dressed in flowing white robes are shown here seated under a banner in which defence of their womenfolk is seen as a strong Muslim preoccupation

Below left A lone white priest attends a Muslim meeting

Below right Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Black Muslims until his death in 1975, addresses a Muslim convention in Chicago. His son, Wallace D. Muhammad, took over the leadership after him

UPI

been looked upon as blasphemous by any mainstream Muslim. Such phrases included: 'Allah (God) in the person of Master W. F. Muhammad, to Whom all Praise is due, the Great Mahdi or Messiah...' and 'Creator of Heaven and Earth...'

Elements of Christian, Judaic and orthodox Islamic origin in the faith included, respectively, the identification of Fard with an individual whose advent had been prophesied in the New Testament (Revelations Chapter XVIII, Verse 1), the identification of the black Nation of Islam with the Israel of the Old Testament, and the adoption of a variant version of Islamic dietary rules in which the eating of collard greens and cornbread was, like pork, forbidden.

The greatest appeal of Elijah Muhammad's religious teachings lay in their black nationalism and the allied belief in the approaching onset of Armageddon - a final battle between good and evil, Black and White.

Armageddon

The concept of the imminence of Armageddon was central to Elijah Muhammad's philosophy and was at the core of the structure of every public meeting of the Nation of Islam which took place while he was its head.

Such meetings incorporated very little religious ceremony in the ordinary sense of that phrase, although there was often some music at its commencement. Throughout the meeting men and women were separated from one another, facing the platform from which a lecture – interspersed with readings from the Koran and the Bible – was delivered to them. Lectures were almost invariably at least partially concerned with the approach of Armageddon and the iniquities of the whites who held the blacks, 'The Lost-Found Nation of Islam in the West', in bondage. These aspects of the lecture were reinforced by a set of symbols delineated on a blackboard upon the platform.

On the left of the blackboard was a US flag and a tree with a black man hanging from it – a symbol of American justice. On the upper right hand of the board was the flag of the Nation of Islam. This showed, in white on a red background, the crescent and star of Islam and the letters I, F, J, and E, standing for Islam, Freedom, Justice and Equality. Also on the board were the words 'Christianity' and 'Islam', the space between them occupied by a giant question mark and the words 'Which One Will Survive The War of Armageddon'.

The message of the coming Armageddon was to prove a potent one – so much so that at one stage of the Black Muslim movement's history those who attended its meetings were compelled temporarily to surrender any sharp object, from a knife to a pair of scissors, which might be used as a weapon. This was done, so it was claimed, to prevent new converts rushing out into the street and single-handedly attempting to start the War of Armageddon.

World War II was a period of growth for the Nation of Islam and by 1945 Elijah Muhammad's movement would seem to have had members in most of the major Northern industrial cities with a sizeable black population. However, the total number of Black Muslims was still small and, while no reliable membership figures are available, it is unlikely that at this time the Nation of Islam numbered more than between two and five thousand.

Dodging the Draft

But while the period of war and consequent black migration from the rural South provided the Nation with opportunities for expansion it also caused some difficulties resulting from the introduction of the draft.

Elijah Muhammad looked upon the war as a white man's struggle and held it to be a distraction from the one thing of real importance, preparation for the coming War of Armageddon. He urged his followers to avoid or refuse compulsory service in the armed forces and, consequently, after being charged and found guilty of violation of the Selective Service Act, was imprisoned from 1942 to 1946.

Other than in the short term, Elijah Muhammad's years in jail benefited both him and the Nation of Islam. For not only did his imprisonment provide a certain amount of welcome publicity – prior to 1942 very few Americans, black or white, had any awareness of the existence of the Black Muslims – but by some black nationalists Elijah Muhammad came to be regarded as having suffered a very real persecution at the hands of the 'blue-eyed devils' who ruled the US.

As a consequence of such publicity, with the aura of martyrdom which Elijah Muhammad had acquired, and a rising tide of militancy amongst young urban blacks, the immediate post-war years witnessed a continued increase in the membership of the Nation of Islam. Amongst the new recruits was a young man, originally named Malcolm Little, who first met Elijah Muhammad in 1952 and was destined to win fame as Malcolm X.

From Nebraska to Mecca

Born in Nebraska in 1925 but growing up in Lansing, Michigan, the future Malcolm X experienced poverty, white racism and their results at a very early age; his home was burned by the Ku Klux Klan, his father was murdered, and his mother was sent to an institute for the mentally ill. In his teens he moved to Boston, became involved in crime, and as a result was sent to prison for burglary.

In 1946, while a 21-year-old convict, he became converted to the Black Muslim faith and, on his release some six years later, made his way to Chicago and Elijah Muhammad, who quickly appreciated the young man's potentialities and sent him on recruiting tours.

Within a very short time Malcolm X – he had abandoned the 'slave name' of Little on his conversion – had become the movement's most effective speaker, organizer, and defender of black civil liberties. So vigorous was he in all these capacities that by the early 1960s he was both minister of the Nation of Islam's No 7 Mosque in Harlem and founder-editor of the movement's newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*.

Under his editorship the content of *Muhammad Speaks* was militant in the extreme, derisory of the pacifist tendencies of the burgeoning civil rights movement dismissive of integration and calling for black separatism. The message was a popular one; by the end of 1963 the number of those who were either members of, or active sympathizers with, the Nation of Islam was probably approaching 70,000.

Almost inevitably the high profile and the remarkable success of Malcolm X began to arouse some misgivings in the minds of Elijah Muhammad and many of those close to him. Simultaneously Malcolm X began to feel uneasy about the divergences between Elijah Muhammad's teachings and those of orthodox Islam. Many began to feel that a split was inevitable and in due course it came.

The immediate occasion of the split was Malcolm X's description of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November 1963 as 'a case of chickens coming home to roost', which Elijah Muhammad used as a pretext for suspending him from membership. Three months later Malcolm X set up his own organization, Muslim Mosque Inc.; in the following November he announced his conversion to orthodox Islam.

Malcolm X's abandonment of the Nation of Islam resulted in much bitter feuding, some of it involving extreme violence, and in 1965 he was assassinated in a Harlem dance hall. Subsequently three Black Muslims were found guilty of his murder.

Orthodoxy Triumphs

Following the departure of Malcolm X and his supporters the Nation of Islam entered a period of stagnation and slow decline which continued until the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975 and the succession of his son, Warith Deen Muhammad, to the leadership of the movement.

W. D. Muhammad carried out a radical transformation of the Nation directed towards Islamic orthodoxy. The deification of Fard as an incarnation of Allah was abandoned, black racism was repudiated, and the organization was renamed, firstly, the World Community of Islam in the West, and secondly, the American Muslim Mission.

Finally, in May 1985, W. D. Muhammad announced the dissolution of the American Muslim Mission and the incorporation of its mosques and their attendant educational, economic and cultural institutions into the worldwide Muslim community.

In general orthodox Islam had triumphed – but there survived a small New York splinter group under Louis Farrakhan which retained the original name and teachings of the Nation of Islam.

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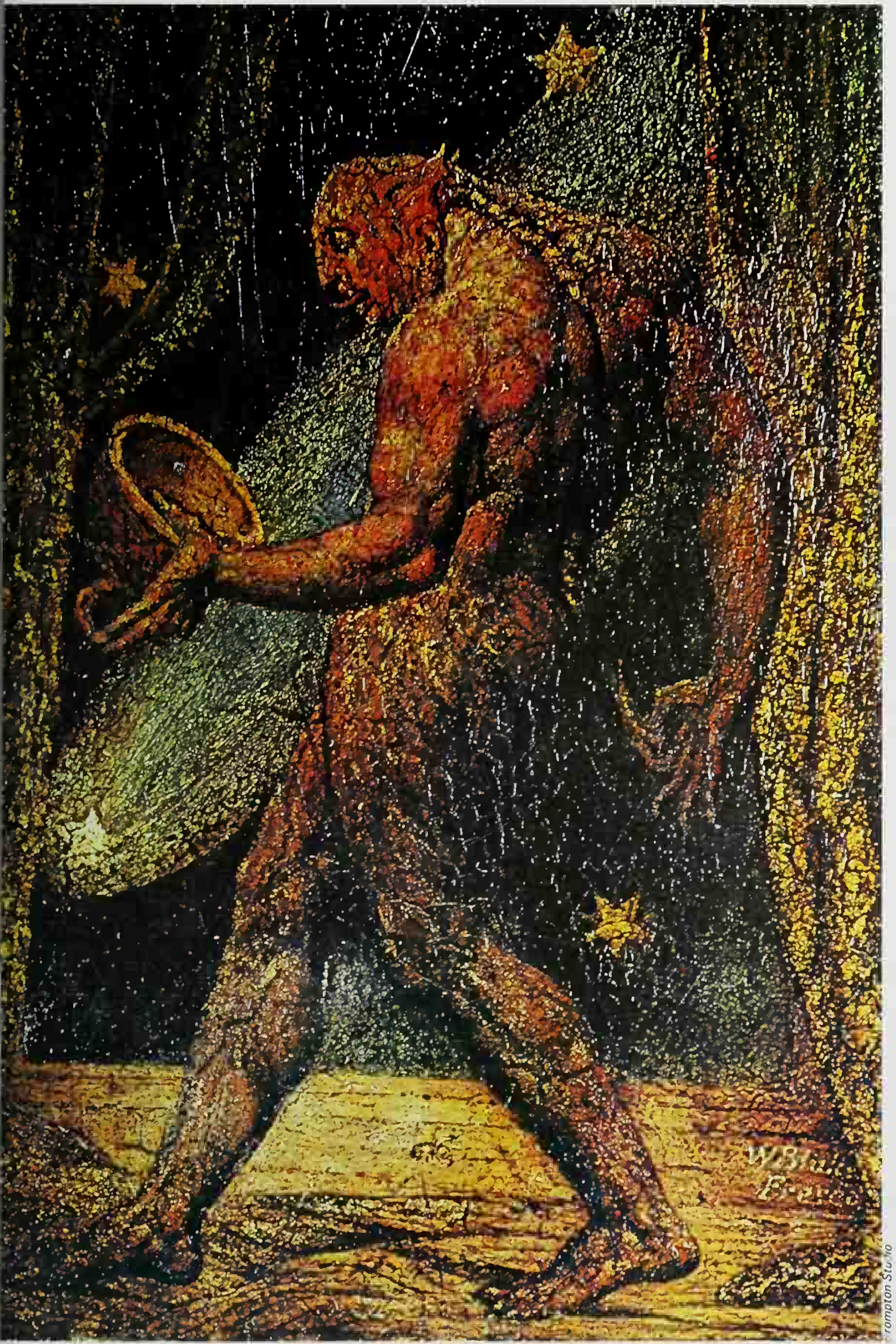
BLAKE

MAKER OF MYTHS



rompton Studio

'The world of Imagination is the world of Eternity.' Blake exalted imagination and detested reason. He sought to portray 'eternal forms', the total being of things which we normally see only partially: *Portrait of a Flea*

This great painter, poet and mystic rejected reason and preferred imagination as the path to truth. 'To me,' he said, 'this world is all one continued vision of fancy or imagination' and he believed that much of his visionary poetry was 'dictated' to him: 'the authors are in eternity'

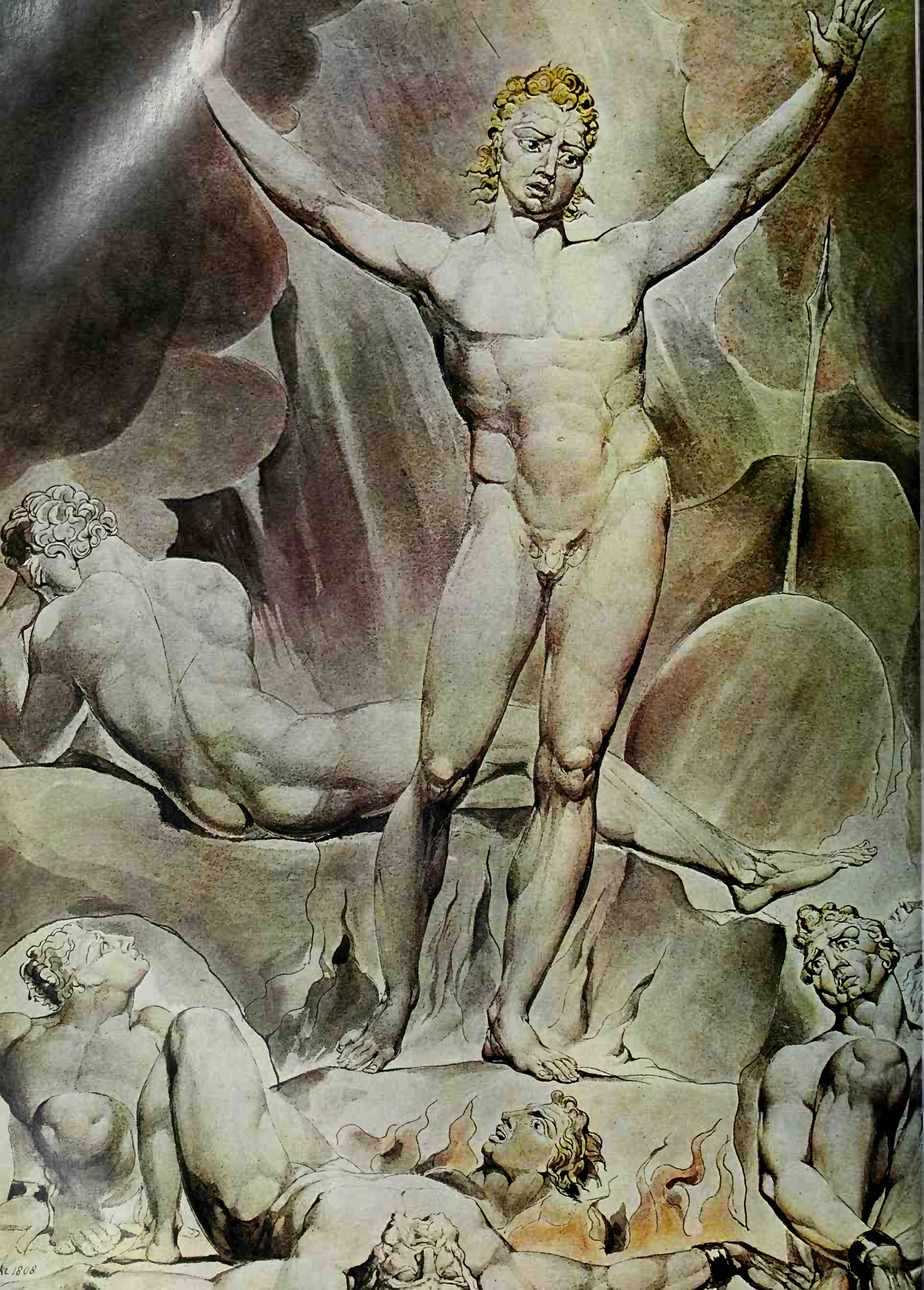
WILLIAM BLAKE (1757–1827) has been called by some a mystic, by others a gnostic. Swinburne praised him as a champion of evil; W. B. Yeats believed him to have been a Rosicrucian initiate; Marxists have claimed him as an early prophet of revolution. He has been acclaimed as a surrealist; as an expressionist; as a forerunner of Freud or Jung, in advance of his time. Yet his disciples called themselves 'the Shoreham Ancients', indicating in this appeal to antiquity their intention of returning to a tradition stemming mainly from Plato.

What is in no doubt is Blake's stature. He has been called 'the Greatest Englishman'. Yet to call him the greatest English poet would be absurd. Many find his turbulent Michelangelesque forms repellent; his long 'Prophetic Books' contain magnificent fragments but are incoherent, lacking the formal structure which epic poetry demands. His lyrics are often beautiful, but less so for their artistry than for the resonances they set in motion in the reader's mind.

Blake's genius was perhaps principally that of a creator of myths. When we think of Blake, we think of a living world of gods and demons in the continuous activity of their uninhibited energy. His pantheon of spiritual beings, or energies, whose names he himself invented, seems to exist in its own right no less than the pantheons of Greece or of Egypt, independently of those works in which the gods are depicted. Blake is an outstanding, and perhaps a unique, example of a polytheist, a believer in many gods, who was also a Christian.

The Spirit of Prophecy

Blake's gods, the 'Zoas', their 'sons', 'daughters' and 'emanations' are what C. G. Jung called archetypes, those 'self-portraits of the instinct' or basic mental patterns or


ke 1808

Tyger, Tyger

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry? . . .

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears
Dare he laugh his mark to see?
Dare he who made the lamb make thee?

The Tyger

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.
Auguries of Innocence

The sword sung on the barren heath,
The sickle in the fruitful field:
The sword he sung a song of death,
But could not make the sickle yield.

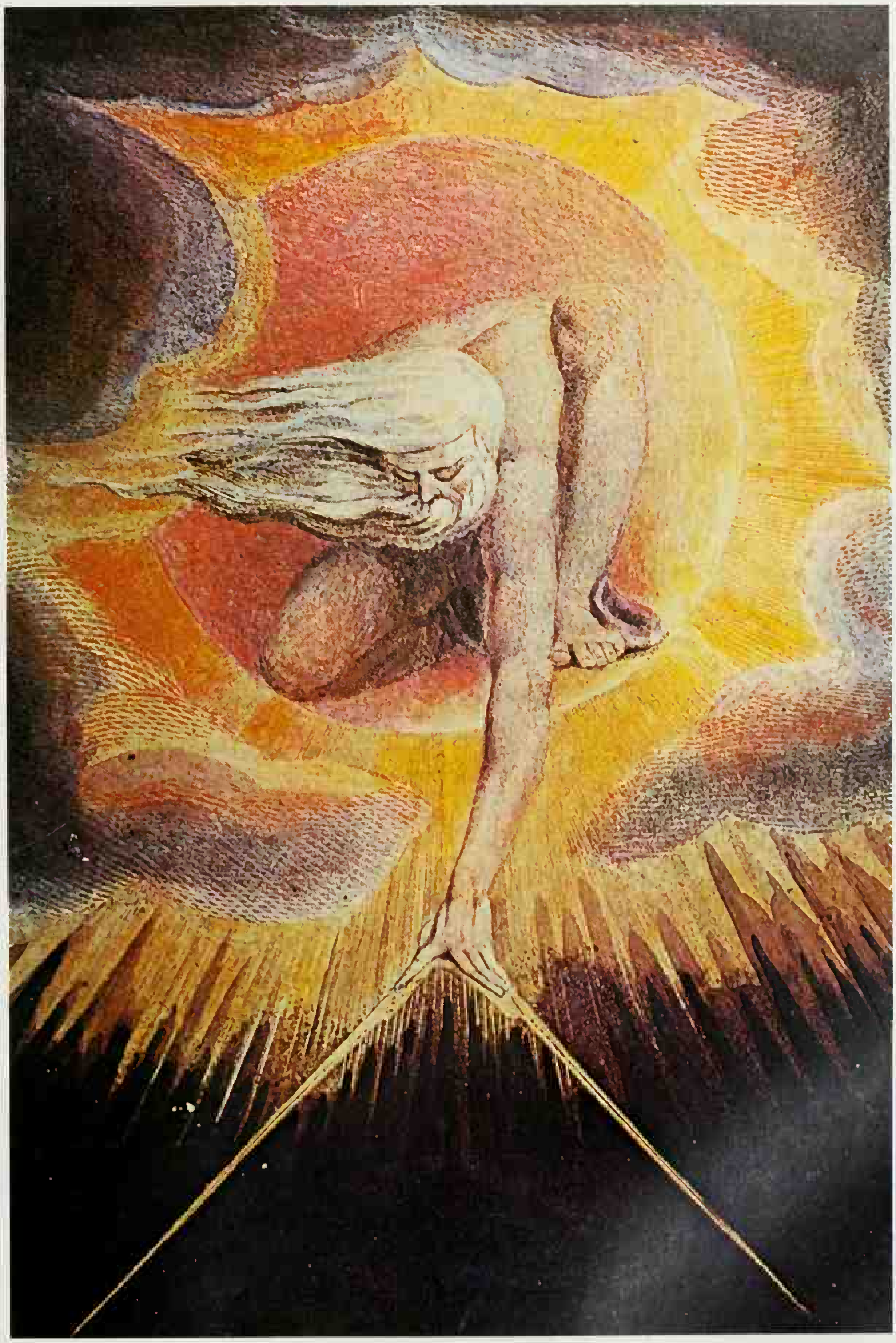
From Blake's poems

mages; and these images he discerned ithin that order of the mind which he alled the collective unconscious, since it is ommon to all humankind. Blake believed hat 'all Deities reside in the human breast', hat 'all religions are one', and that 'the eligions of all Nations are derived from ach Nation's different reception of the oetic Genius, which is everywhere call'd he Spirit of Prophecy.'

There is no orderly formulation of Blake's ythological system, though commentators om Yeats in the 1880s to the present time ave attempted to discover or impose such n order. Blake seems to have been at all imes possessed of a kind and degree of conciousness which comes to those mortals ho are less gifted only in flashes. His isions' seem to have been of two kinds: an cute perception of the content of the collec-ive unconscious; and an illuminated vision f Nature.

He saw himself as a prophet in the Iebrew tradition; and his 'visions' as elating to the national mind of England, he Giant Albion'. He wrote: 'Prophets, in he modern sense of the word, have never xisted. A Prophet is a Seer, not an rbitrary Dictator.' Inspired poets are no ess prophets than Moses or Ezekiel: Ailton's *Paradise Lost* is as true as Genesis r Exodus', for the truth of inspired art is ot that of historians, but the abiding reali-ies of the mind itself.

There are two extreme views about the ature and source of Blake's knowledge. We ust take him at his word when he says hat his visions came to him spontaneously, nd evidently with a speed and energy hich outran his powers of recording his mpressions. He said that much of his


Layton Sun

ight **In a famous painting, *The Ancient Of ays*, the power of reason, named Urizen in lake's mythological system, is shown creating he visible, material world. For Blake this event was the same as the 'fall into Division', the usurpation by reason of 'Jesus, the magination', the divinity which is in every human being. The dividers symbolize both rational creation and the divisive spiritual nfluence of reason**

Left **To Blake, Satan is 'the Selfhood' or separated ego, whose Kingdom is a kingdom of nothing. Evil is a state of mind through which man passes: *Satan arousing the Rebel Angels***

‘To Me This World is all One continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination’

poetry was ‘dictated’ and, on completing his *Milton*, he wrote in a letter, ‘I may praise it, since I dare not pretend to be any other than the Secretary; the Authors are in Eternity.’

On the other hand, throughout his work there is evidence, not only of a powerful intellect, but of an extensive knowledge of English poetry and history, of contemporary political events and writings, and of that body of esoteric or occult knowledge which led Yeats to conclude that Blake had access to the secret oral tradition of the legendary Rosicrucians.

Perhaps on the strength of this supposition, paraphrases of Blake were incorporated into the rituals of the Order of the Golden Dawn, to which Yeats himself belonged (see GOLDEN DAWN).

But it is not necessary to assume that Blake was an initiate in any other sense than the only real initiation – insight into spiritual reality and an imaginative understanding of whatever works he read or studied. There is nothing in his writings which he could not have learned from his wide and deep reading in the Hermetic alchemical and Neoplatonic texts available to him in English.

As a young man, he was a member of the Swedenborgian New Church; he almost certainly knew Thomas Taylor, the Platonist philosopher; he deeply venerated the mystic Jacob Boehme and Paracelsus. He seems to have read Agrippa, Fludd and perhaps Thomas Vaughan and other alchemists. As an apprentice, he worked on the engravings of Jacob Bryant’s *New System of Mythology*, which gave him an introduction to comparative mythology to which he continued to add, throughout his life, whatever knowledge was available. Blake also knew something of Indian religion, and of Welsh and British antiquities, and he was well-read in Latin and Greek authors.

Single Vision and Newton’s Sleep

Blake consistently and cogently condemned the materialist philosophy of Bacon, Newton and Locke, whom he countered with arguments derived from Plato, Plotinus and Berkeley, delivered with an energy all his own. He followed the Cabalistic tradition of four worlds, each representing a state of consciousness (see CABALA). His terms for these worlds or states are Eden, Beulah, Generation and Ulro.

> Now I a fourfold vision see,
> And a fourfold vision is given to me;
> ’Tis fourfold in my supreme delight,
> And threefold in soft Beulah’s night
> And twofold Always. Nay God us keep
> From Single vision and Newton’s sleep.

‘Newton’s sleep’ is the materialist view which takes the quantitative aspect of the world for its total reality. Blake regarded the Creation as a system of appearances rather than of material objects external to the mind.

> The Sky is an immortal Tent built by the Sons of Los
> And every Space that a Man views around his dwelling place
> Standing on his own roof or in his garden on a mount
> Of twenty-five cubits in height, such space is his Universe.

Every man inhabits his own Eden, his ‘garden on a mount’, and in this sense, his own universe, a somewhat similar view has since been put forward by the philosopher Whitehead.

> As to that false appearance which appears to be reason
> As of a Globe rolling through Voidness, it is a delusion of Ulro.
> The microscope knows not of this nor the Telescope: they alter
> The ratio of the Spectator’s Organs, but leave Objects untouched.

Blake considered Wordsworth’s vision of Nature to be distorted by the Lockean philosophy, which regards man as the passive recipient of impressions from an external world.

Blake held that we are able to perceive the world according to our kind and degree of consciousness: ‘As a man is, so he Sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers. You certainly mistake, when you say that the Visions of Fancy are not to be found in This World. To Me This World is all One continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination,’ he wrote. In his conception of mind as the reality and Nature as a system of appearances, Blake was conceivably almost as much indebted to the Indian as to the western occult tradition.

The Four Zoas

Blake was a lifelong Christian, whose theology was based upon the Swedenborgian belief that a ‘new Church’ (which began in ‘the heavens’, or inner world, in 1757, the year of Blake’s birth) was to be the religion of ‘God as man’; a Christian humanism (see SWEDENBORG). Blake took the term ‘Divine Humanity’ from Swedenborg and his affirmation of ‘Jesus the Imagination’, present in and to every individual being, certainly derives its peculiar emphasis from Swedenborg. Swedenborgian also is Blake’s conception of spiritual communities, the collective identity of those in the same spiritual ‘state’. Swedenborg’s ‘Grand Man’, who contains in his one life all human souls, gave Blake one of his finest conceptions:

> We live as One Man; for contracting our infinite senses
> We behold multitude, or expanding we behold as one,
> As One Man all the Universal Family, and that One Man
> We call Jesus the Christ, and he in us, and we in him
> Live in perfect harmony in Eden, the land of life.

The principal enactors of the interior drama of man’s ‘fall into Division and his Resurrection to Unity’ are the Four Zoas, the ‘living creatures’ of Ezekiel’s vision of the Chariot (Ezekiel, chapter 1) and the Beasts of the Apocalypse. These ‘four mighty ones’, whom Blake has so powerfully characterized both in his poetry and in his designs, are named Urizen, Luvah, Urthona and Tharmas. They are identical with Jung’s four functions of reason, feeling, intuition and sense. The ‘fall’ of man results from the separation of these functions from ‘Jesus the Imagination’, the God within, and from one another. Each in turn attempts to dominate man; but especially (since Blake’s myth relates specifically to ‘the giant Albion’, the collective being of the English nation) Urizen, the rational power.

From this usurpation by reason of ‘the throne of God’ which is in every man, all our national ills have followed. But each of the Zoas has an eternal and a temporal aspect; thus Luvah (love) becomes, when thwarted,

Blake's Great Task

Trembling I sit day and night, my friends are astonish'd at me,
Yet they forgive my wanderings. I rest not from my great task!
To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes
Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity
Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination.
O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness and love!
Annihilate the Selfhood in me: be thou all my life!
Guide thou my hand, which trembles exceedingly upon the rock of ages,
While I write of the building of Golgonooza, & of the terrors of Entuthon,
Of Hand and Hyle & Coban, of Kwantok, Peachey, Brereton, Slayd & Hutton,
Of the terrible sons & daughters of Albion, and their Generations.

Jerusalem, chapter 1

National Portrait Gallery London

Blake said of his poetry 'I may praise it, since... the Authors are in Eternity'. Plaster cast of a life-mask of the poet and artist

Orc, the destructive spirit of war and revolution, and also the cunning serpent of sexual lust. The senses (Tharmas) become mere formless energy proliferating in a blind 'polypus' of vegetation. Los, the temporal vehicle of Urthona, is relatively unfallen, in Blake's picture of the national psyche, and is said to have 'kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble' – a comment, perhaps, upon the prophetic role of the arts in England.

Each of the Zoas has, besides 'sons' and 'daughters', a feminine counterpart or vehicle or 'emanation'. The emanation of Los is Enitharmon, or space, who brings to birth the conception of time. Luvah's emanation is Vala, the 'veil' of Nature. When Vala, who is in reality a 'shadow' of the soul (Jerusalem, in Blake's mythology), lays claim to substantial and independent reality, she becomes a cruel and destructive principle. The 'sickness of Albion' Blake diagnosed as a tyranny of Vala made possible by the usurpation of abstract reason, Urizen. The Redemption of man is perpetually enacted as 'the Saviour' – the God within – re-integrates the separated faculties into the Imagination.

Satan of the Self

As Blake's 'saviour' is 'Jesus the Imagination', so his Satan is 'the Selfhood', or separated ego; whose freedom is delusive, and whose kingdom is the world cut off from God, the Hades of the spiritually dead, whom Blake calls the Spectres. The separated 'spectres' functioning independently and without orientation are, in modern psychological terms, complexes; and Jung has called the ego a special instance of the complex. Like Blake, Jung saw the cure as a return of the parts to the whole to which they belong. Blake called Satan's Kingdom 'a kingdom of nothing'; for there is no being called Satan, only a 'state'.

For Blake there is no irredeemably evil being; evil he assigns to 'states' of mind and not to individuals. 'These States Exist now. Man Passes on, but States remain for Ever; he passes thro' them like a traveller who may as well suppose that the places he has passed thro' exist no more, as a Man may suppose that the States he has pass'd thro' Exist no more. ' Blake's account of the Fall shows affinities with various formulations of the western occult tradition, and especially with Boehme (see BOEHME). The Fall comes about through the usurpation of a 'second creator' who in Blake's mythology is Urizen. The Creation (which for Blake is the same as the Fall) comes about through the 'binding' of Urizen within the 'cave' of the five senses, an event described in a passage several times repeated in the Prophetic Books: 'For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow climbs of his cavern.'

The Visions of Eternity

The remaining Zoas and the four Emanations are drawn down with this Demiurge into his fallen world of 'error, or Creation'. Boehme describes the same event as the corruption of the Seven Fountain Spirits, whom he names from the gods of the seven planets known in antiquity. Blake in this context often calls the fallen beings the 'starry ones', in this same astrological sense. They return to their beauty and perfection when the repentant Urizen acknowledges the supremacy of 'Jesus the Imagination' over reason.

Blake's most famous designs – the 22 illustrations of the Book of Job – are a pictorial narrative of the 'fall' of Satan from the unity of the 'God within'. Job is tormented by the reasonings of his own selfhood until he acknowledges the divine mystery, which reason cannot fathom. The same rejection of reason appears in a fine passage in *Milton*.

To cleanse the Face of My Spirit by Self-annihilation,
To bathe in the Waters of Life, to wash off the Not Human
I come in Self-annihilation and the grandeur of Inspiration
To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour.

A central theme in Blake's mythology is the Last Judgement, the subject of one of his most ambitious compositions, and of his magnificent prose account of this work. The Judgement is not, for Blake, the arbitrary punitive intervention of a tyrant god, but the manifestation of 'that which eternally exists, really and unchangeably.' It is the supreme human revelation of things as they are, in their full being; an awakening from sleep, a resurrection from spiritual death. 'The world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body. This world of Imagination is Infinite and Eternal, whereas the world of Generation or Vegetation, is Finite and Temporal. There Exist in that Eternal world the Permanent Realities of Every thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature. All things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine body of the Saviour, the True Vine of Eternity, the Human Imagination. . .' Blake's 'eternal forms' are not abstract ideals but, on the contrary, the total being of those things which we normally perceive only dimly and partially. Natural forms, trees and mountains, the heavenly constellations and the smallest maze of dancing flies are, seen with the supreme vision, not less themselves but more:

. . . These are the Sons of Los: these the Visions of Eternity,
But we see only as it were the hem of their garments
When with our vegetable eyes we view these wondrous Visions.

In the light of the supreme vision all illusions, self-deceptions and misconceptions cease to exist. 'Error is Created. Truth is Eternal. Error, or Creation, will be Burned up, and then, and not till then, Truth of Eternity will appear. It is Burnt up the Moment Men cease to behold it.'

KATHLEEN RAINE

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Towards the end of the 19th century the eccentric and extraordinary 'H.P.B.', founder of the Theosophical Society, dominated the occult scene in a career which moved from Spiritualism to an attempt to unite the eastern and western magical traditions, and from the performance of apparent miracles to violent accusations of fraud

John Symonds

MME BLAVATSKY

HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY (1831–1891) was the foundress of modern occultism and one of the most remarkable women who ever lived. In the summer of 1873, after travelling steerage across the Atlantic from France, she arrived penniless in New York. She was then 42 years of age, weighed 16 stone, rolled her own cigarettes and chain-smoked. She found lodgings in a tenement house for working women.

Little is known about her before this time. She was the daughter of Colonel Peter Hahn and cousin of Count Sergei Yulievich Witte, a Tsarist prime minister. She received no formal education and went to no university. A few weeks before her 17th birthday she married Nikifor Blavatsky, Vice-Governor of the Province of Erivan in Transcaucasia. After a few months of marriage, she ran away from her husband to lead the life of a Victorian hippy. According to Count Witte, she rode on horseback in a circus in Constantinople, gave piano lessons in London and Paris, was in charge of an artificial flower factory in Tiflis, and for a while was assistant to Daniel Dunglass Home, the celebrated Spiritualist and levitationist (see HOME).

An American artist, Albert Leight Rawson, met her in Cairo during 1850–1, when she was dressed as an Arab and smoking pot. According to him, she took lessons from Sheik Yusuf ben Makerzi, 'the Chief of the Serpent Charmers', in the art of handling live snakes. With a certain Countess Kazenov, whom she met at Shepheard's Hotel, she called on Paulos Metamon, a Copt magician.

H.P.B.: We are students who have heard of your great learning and skill in magic and wish to learn at your feet.

P.M.: I perceive that you are two Franks in disguise and I have no doubt you are in search of knowledge – of occult and magical lore. I look for the coin.

It was Spiritualism which had drawn her to America at the age of 42: no less than 18 million Americans, it has been calculated, among a population of over 38 million, attended Spiritualist seances and read Spiritualist papers. It was even believed that through the intense concentration of unusually gifted mediums, the dead could materialize in their former bodies. This was supposed to be happening at Chittenden in Vermont. Two enterprising brothers, William and Horatio Eddy, were said to be materializing scores of people who had once walked the earth – Indian squaws, soldiers of the Civil War, drowned sailors, prominent manufacturers, children. The seances took place either in the dim light of a murky lamp or in pitch dark, and the audience were kept at a safe distance by a wooden barrier. Sometimes only half an arm would appear through a slit in the curtain which draped the platform – to compress a spring balance to the 40 lb mark. This was to show how real the materializations were.

Some of the spirit forms were gifted musically and there were regular sing-songs during the evening, and before the seances began the audience usually danced· it was all part of the entertainment.

Fame as a Medium

Journalists who reported these events were unable to say if they were genuine or not. The New York *Daily Graphic* sent an astute observer, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, to report on them. He already had a reputation as an investigator of psychic phenomena. When his articles appeared in the *Graphic*, they created a sensation.

Madame Blavatsky in New York read them eagerly, dropped the cravats she was sewing or the advertising cards she was designing, and hurried off to the Eddys' farm, which had been turned into a hotel to accommodate the visitors.

'Good gracious, look at that specimen, will you?' said the Colonel to his companion, an artist whom he had brought with him to make drawings of the spirit forms.

In the dining-room of the Eddys' farmstead, he had caught sight of a broad-shouldered woman with frizzy blonde hair; she was wearing a red shirt. (In those days a red shirt expressed sympathy for Garibaldi's libertarian views, not for socialism.) The artist turned his head and saw a moon-shaped face, with large mystical blue eyes. The Colonel took a seat opposite her 'to indulge in my favourite habit of character studying.' She was talking volubly in French to another woman. After the evening meal, the two ladies retired outside for a smoke. The Colonel followed, struck a match for Mme Blavatsky's cigarette and said politely '*Permettez moi, Madame.*'

'I hesitated before coming here,' sai Mme Blavatsky, 'because I was afraid c meeting that Colonel Olcott.'

'Why should you be afraid of him Madame?' asked the Colonel gravely.

'Oh, because I fear he might write abou me in his paper.'

Naturally the Colonel wrote about her i his paper and Mme Blavatsky was delighted He described her as a Russian aristocrat - her mother was Helena Fadeyev, daughter o Princess Helena Dolgoruky – and as medium of most extraordinary ability wh alone could solve the riddle of these manifestations at Chittenden. Instead of solving th riddle, Mme Blavatsky made it more mysterious. Now the oddest characters wer called back to life, Russians and Georgian who appeared in their native costumes twanged the lezguinka, and answered Mm Blavatsky back (in Russian, of course) whe she asked them how they were getting along.

On her return to New York City, she wa interviewed by the *Graphic*, who told thei readers in a feature article that 'Madam Helen de Blavatsky' had spent three night in the Pyramid of Cheops, had witnessed th famous D. D. Home being carried out of on of the upper windows of a house in Londo and wafted gently to a waiting carriag below, that she had made a fortune by buying ostrich feathers cheaply in the Sudan and that she had narrowly escaped death b the blowing up of the *Eumonia* in which sh was travelling. 'As I lay on my back in th water, I saw limbs, heads and trunks all falling around me.' Only this last statemen was true.

The interview was larded with patches o conversation.

'Do you fellows smoke here?' she asked.

'I don't,' replied the journalist who wa conducting the interview.

'Oh, you mean fellow!'

'But the others do and you can smoke i you wish.'

'All we Russian ladies like our cigarette Do you know poor Queen Victoria nearly ha a fit when her Russian daughter-in-law smokes?'

The Colonel insisted that there was n sexual love between himself and Mme Blavatsky and he emphasized this by pointing out that she was unattractive physically, a view which conflicted with the description of her in the *Graphic*: 'She is handsome, with full voluptuous figure, large eyes, well-formed nose and rich sensuous mouth and chin.'

Articles about her appeared in other New York papers. Then Spiritualism in America received a set-back through the exposure of a mean fraud perpetrated on Robert Dale Owen, the Senator and distinguished reformer, son of Robert Owen, the utopian socialist. He had fallen in love with a spirit form, a young woman called Katie King who had lived in the 17th century; he gave her jewellery, which vanished away with her when she re-entered the spirit world. Then the news was broken to Owen that she was real. He was shocked to hear it and described it as a vile slander.

The Colonel and Mme Blavatsky set to work to investigate. They concluded that

Katie King was a genuine spirit but they were too late to save the sanity of Robert Dale Owen.

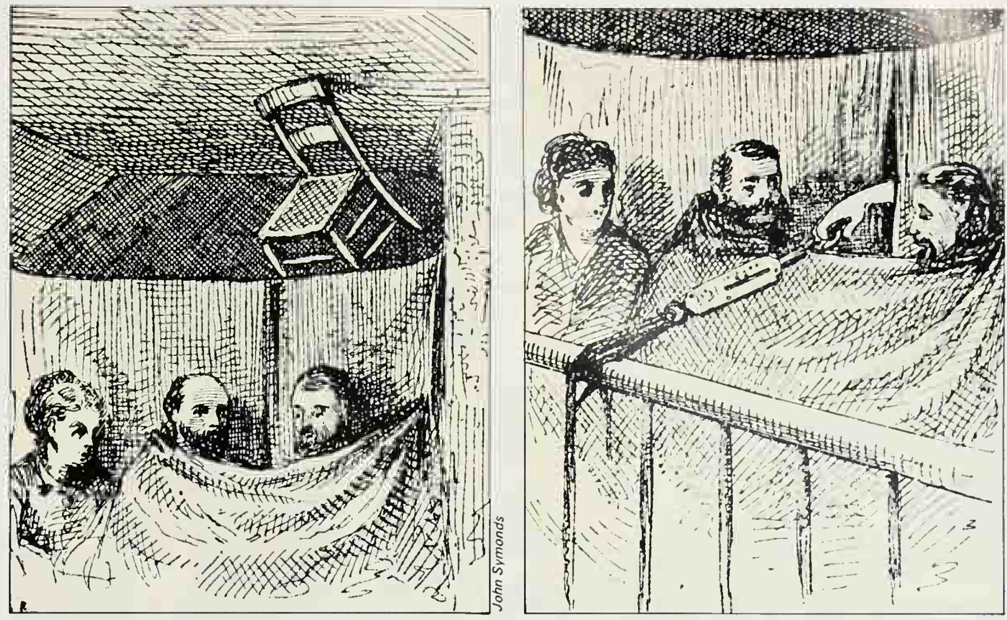
Isis Unveiled

Like any other medium, Mme Blavatsky had her spirit 'guide' or 'control', an intermediary between her and the world of spirits in general. He was called John King and she referred to him in terms of great affection, called him her Holy Guardian Angel, and said she would not put a foot out of doors without consulting with him first. But when the interest in Spiritualism declined, she talked less and less of John King and began to mention other beings, more god-like than human, who had chosen her to be their messenger. There were several of them, known collectively as the Brothers or Masters; their powers were practically unlimited.

Such supermen are part of eastern tradition. In India, they are called Mahatmas, great souls (see MAHATMA). They would occasionally drop the Colonel a note, telling him to do this or that for Mme Blavatsky. The note was usually left lying on his desk, having been precipitated there by occult means from the Brothers' Sanctuary in Tibet. It was a hint from one of the Brothers which made the Colonel leave his wife and three children and set up house with Mme Blavatsky at 46 Irving Place, New York City. Here, during their 'at homes' would come their friends who were interested in magic, the Cabala, Egyptian religion, rope tricks and other tricks, and talk into the night over cups of tea.

One evening during 1875, after one of the guests had given a lecture on Egyptian art, the Colonel had a brilliant idea. It was that they should put their meetings on a formal basis by organizing themselves into a society. Mme Blavatsky seconded the proposal and after hunting for a suitable name, the word *Theosophy*, meaning knowledge of God or divine wisdom, was found in the dictionary and adopted. Thus was inaugurated the Theosophical Society. The next step was for Mme Blavatsky to write a book on this divine wisdom or body of truth concerning God, man and the universe; it occupied her for the next two years and was published in New York in 1877, under the title of *Isis Unveiled*. While writing and smoking hashish, she said she had glimpsed the goddess Isis herself.

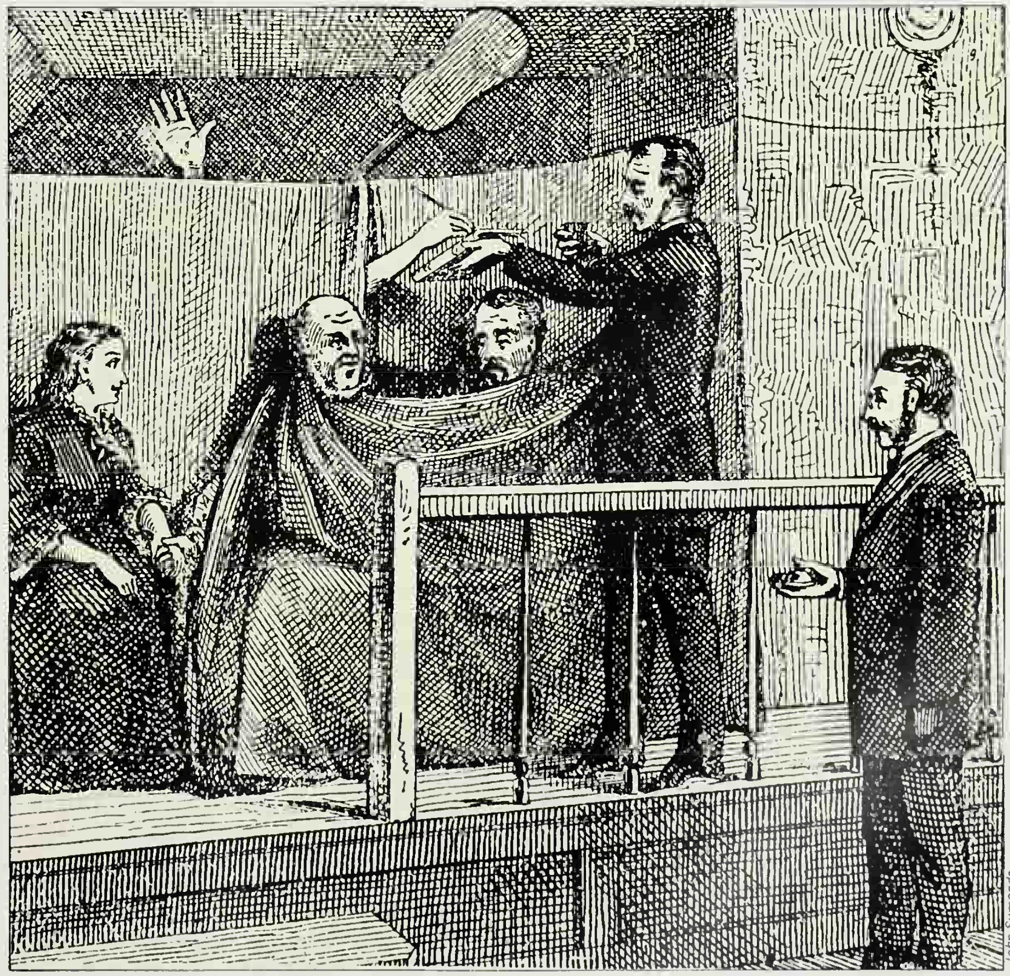
Isis Unveiled is not an outline of magic or of Theosophy but a survey of the literature of magic, witchcraft, alchemy, eastern thought and western science – a gallimaufry of fact and fable on many subjects. Her aim was to redeem magic from the disfavour into which it had fallen since the rise of science in the 17th century. She postulated the doctrine of the Astral Light or vital ether, which she called by the Sanskrit term of Akasha, a tenuous substance, and propounded the notion of a secret science known to the ancients, and a secret brotherhood of adepts who, down the ages, have transmitted this secret knowledge to those ready to receive it. She herself was in touch with the Tibetan section of this brotherhood, one of whom had actually written whole pages of *Isis Unveiled* for her in the middle of the night while



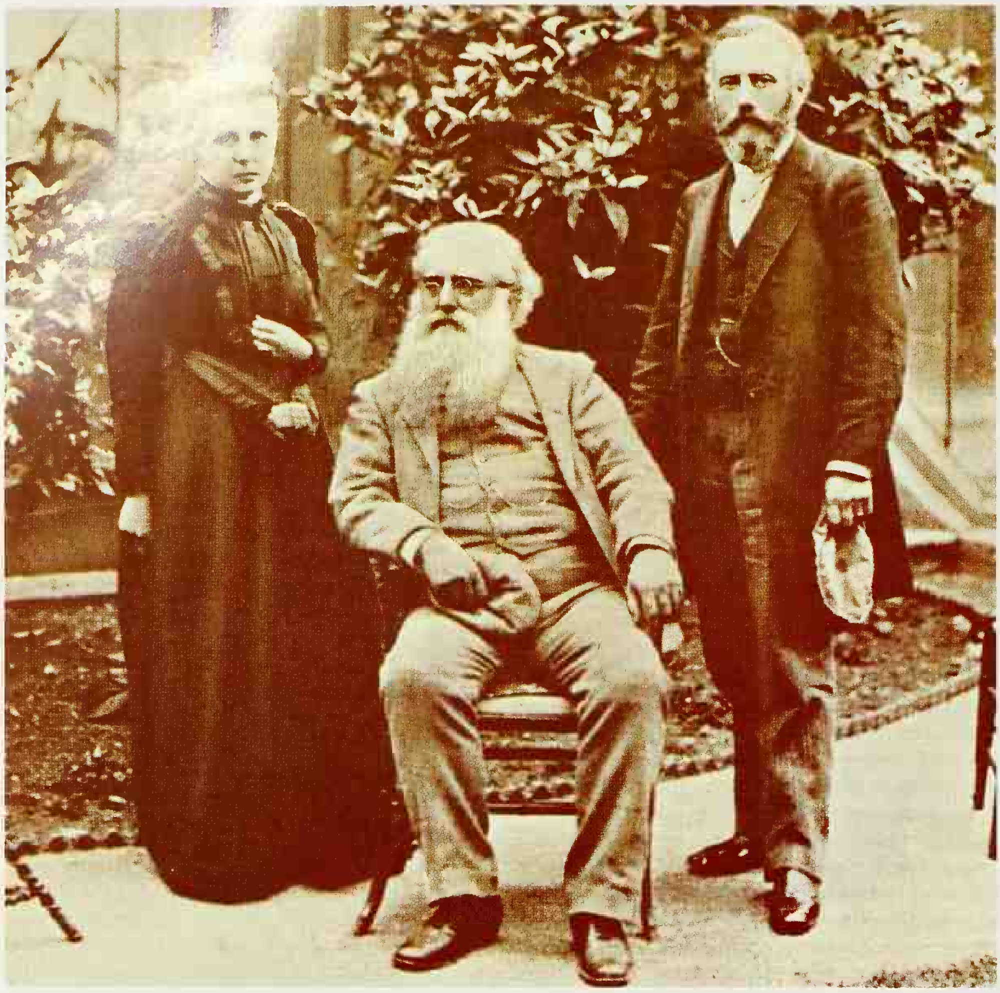
John Symonds

John Symonds

Mme Blavatsky was a frequent and enthusiastic visitor to the home of the Eddy brothers at Chittenden in Vermont. The two brothers, William and Horatio, were renowned for their extraordinary powers as mediums and their ability to summon a succession of spirit forms, including Indian squaws, soldiers who had been killed during the Civil War, and drowned sailors. The seances were held in a small upstairs room called the Circle Room. At one end of the room there was a raised platform with a railing to prevent members of the audience from rushing forward in their excitement. The medium sat in a narrow cabinet against the right-hand wall of the platform and the spirit manifestations appeared from behind a curtain. On Mme Blavatsky's first visit to the Circle she was welcomed by the spirit of a childhood friend from her native Russia, who had long before been killed in a street accident. He replied to her questions by plucking the strings of a guitar and concluded by playing the Georgian national anthem. At subsequent meetings chairs were elevated *(above left)*, spirits danced with selected guests and on one occasion a spirit even uttered a few words. Colonel Olcott devised a method of weighing a spirit by means of a spring balance *(above right)*. When compressed the balance indicated 40 pounds



John Symonds



John Symonds

Early leaders of the Theosophical movement: Annie Besant (*left*), a devoted disciple of Mme Blavatsky, took over leadership of the Society on her death. Colonel H. S. Olcott (*centre*), was co-founder of the Theosophical Society with Mme Blavatsky in 1875. Mr W. Q. Judge (*right*) was a leader of the American branch

she was fast asleep. This notion was not new: the idea of a brotherhood of adepts is found earlier, in the teachings of the Rosicrucians for instance; but the time was ripe for presenting these ideas again, especially when linked with eastern thought.

The Frenchman, Eliphas Levi (see LEVI), in his attempts to resuscitate western ceremonial magic with its roots in the Cabala, had entered the field before her, but it was Mme Blavatsky's peculiar merit to have made the bridge between the western and eastern magical systems and to have found the source of occult wisdom in the eastern Wisdom tradition.

What is remarkable about so large and learned a work as *Isis Unveiled* is not that it was written by Mme Blavatsky, a performer at Spiritualist seances, who knew neither Sanskrit nor Pali, but that it contains statements of an intuitive kind which show that she was in tune with the spirit of her time, with the beginning of that great movement towards an understanding of the 'objective psyche' or the unconscious.

The Hidden Masters

Meanwhile the Theosophical Society, like the interest in Spiritualism in general, had declined; its members had grown tired of Theosophy and resigned from the Society. This was one of the reasons why Mme Blavatsky decided to take the bold step of selling up and going to India, land of the Mahatmas, taking the Colonel with her, of course. Westerners, she said, were too deeply rooted in materialism to understand Theosophy and the magic of the Secret Brothers – but India, the citadel of occultism, India of the golden face! . . .

A Permanent Enchantment

Madame Blavatsky describes how she wrote *Isis Unveiled:*

I am solely occupied, not with writing *Isis*, but with Isis herself. I live in a kind of permanent enchantment, a life of visions and sights, with open eyes, and no chance whatever to deceive my senses! I sit and watch the fair good goddess constantly. And as she displays before me the secret meaning of her long-lost *secrets*, and the veil, becoming with every hour thinner and more transparent, gradually falls off before my eyes, I hold my breath and can hardly trust to my senses! . . . Night and day the images of the past are ever marshalled before my inner eyes. Slowly, and gliding silently like images in an enchanted panorama, centuries after centuries appear before me . . . I certainly refuse point-blank to attribute it to my own knowledge or memory. I tell you seriously I am helped. And he who helps me is my Guru.

Quoted in John Symonds, *Madame Blavatsky, Medium and Magician*

The Colonel had been in contact with an Indian organization which had, he and Mme Blavatsky thought, a similar point of view to their own. They were mistaken in this but the Arya Samaj, or Society of Men of Good Will, a Hindu reformist organization to which they affiliated their Theosophical Society, made the bridge for them to India.

They arrived in India in February 1879. The Colonel was so moved to be at last on the sacred soil of India and among his spiritual kinsmen, as he called Indians, that he sank on his knees and kissed the stone of the quayside. They were met by the Bombay representative of the Arya Samaj, who entertained them lavishly, and then gave them a large bill 'for expenses'. Mme Blavatsky was furious and used language which the Colonel called 'ironclad'.

Dayananda Sarasvati, the Arya Samaj leader, adopted a reserved attitude towards these peculiar Americans who seemed to him to be interested only in the *siddhis* (powers) of yoga. Through an interpreter he said to the Colonel, for he did not speak to women, that the claims of yoga were true and based on the laws of nature; the *rishis* (seers) of old could do anything, of course, for they were more or less divine.

In October, Mme Blavatsky and the Colonel sank their small capital into *The Theosophist*, a monthly magazine devoted to oriental philosophy, art, literature and occultism, the first number of which contained the first instalment of the autobiography of Dayananda Sarasvati, the Great Teacher. It sold out immediately.

They made friends everywhere. Perhaps because of their anti-British and even anti-European sentiments, combined with their love of everything Indian, the Society steadily grew and Mme Blavatsky and the Colonel soon found themselves the centre of an organization with international possibilities: in spite of a quarrel with the Great Teacher, who called them a couple of charlatans.

The Hidden Masters or Secret Brothers who lived in the Himalayas and in inaccessible Tibet where, during 1864, Mme Blavatsky had been initiated, or so she said, provided the driving force. They were the power behind the miracles – there is no other word for them – which Mme Blavatsky was now regularly performing, such as materializing out of the unseen particles in the air anything which she needed at the moment – a teacup, for instance. One of the Brothers, named Koot Hoomi, was helping the Society as well as he could by sending from Tibet persuasive letters to distinguished Englishmen in India who were sympathetically inclined towards Theosophy. That these letters came mainly through Mme Blavatsky or just dropped from the ceiling, was not considered suspicious, except by the Protestant missionaries in India who were the target of Mme Blavatsky's frontal attacks.

The Oxford Sanskrit scholar, Max Müller, editor of *The Sacred Books of the East* series, said that after her quarrel with Dayananda Sarasvati, she decided to found a religion of her own. There is some truth in this for she was drinking at the source of all religions and her synthesis of ancient creeds, though not, strictly speaking, a religion, rather resembled one.

Astral Bells

In March 1880, Mme Coulomb and her husband arrived at the Theosophists' door; they had come from Ceylon where their business had failed and they were in sore straits. Mme Coulomb had known Mme Blavatsky in Cairo in 1872, when Mme Blavatsky had been in sore straits. As soon as Mme Blavatsky caught sight of her old friend Mme Coulomb, with the black-bearded one-eyed husband whom she had since acquired, she gave a cry of joy, and offered them work in the Society. It proved to be an unfortunate thing to have done.

Sometimes in Mme Blavatsky's presence the startling and eerie sound of 'astral bells' would be heard, high up near the ceiling or travelling about the room. It was said to be a sign that her Master was present; it was like the tinkling of a little silver bell.

Raps on the furniture or on the walls, supposedly made by the spirits of the departed, were also heard in her presence; she could easily evoke the spirits. While she was in Simla, the seat of the Government in India during the hot season, during a dinner party she even produced raps on the bald heads of high government officials. She was the talk of India.

The restless Colonel travelled about to spread the word; he established new branches of the Society throughout India and Ceylon, and gained thousands of converts. Occasionally, he bumped into a Mahatma, one of the Hidden Brothers, before whom he bowed down in reverence. Koot Hoomi was tall, handsome, benign, gave him words of advice and vanished into thin air.

On the banks of the Adyar River, just outside Madras, they found for sale a large house in extensive grounds. They had been looking for more commodious premises. They bought it and moved in during 1882. It is still the headquarters of the Theosophical Society.

Scandalous Revelations

In 1884, the founders returned in triumph to Europe. Lady Caithness, Duchess of Pomar, entertained them at her palace at Nice, and while the Colonel was in England lent Mme Blavatsky a flat in Paris. The most exalted French mystics made their pilgrimage to her.

She came over to England where the Society for Psychical Research proposed that they should investigate her 'marvellous phenomena' (the phrase was not ironic), and publish their findings. She agreed without hesitation. They examined the Colonel who talked about astral travelling; then an Indian member of the Society who related convincingly the marvels he had experienced; finally they had several chats with Mme Blavatsky herself. But before they had time to publish their conclusions, a bombshell exploded in the very centre of Theosophy in Madras. The Protestant missionaries had published some highly indiscreet and revealing letters, allegedly written by Mme Blavatsky to Mme Coulomb, which clearly exposed the great Mme Blavatsky as a fraud and her 'marvellous phenomena' as the work of confederates, of whom Mme Coulomb was the most important. The letters had been brought to the editor of the Madras *Christian College Magazine* by Mme Coulomb in a rage: she had been expelled from the headquarters at Adyar after a quarrel with other members of the committee in charge.

News of the scandal was published in the world's press; it made the Society for Psychical Research reconsider their not unfavourable views on Theosophy. The crudeness of the revelations startled them. Mme Blavatsky, it was alleged, had got Mme Coulomb to make a dummy figure of a man which on moonlit nights M Coulomb wore on his shoulders to give the faithful the impression that it was Koot Hoomi hurrying by. And Mme Coulomb had described how she had dropped the Mahatma letters through a slit in the rafters. In other words, these letters had not been precipitated from Tibet. (By 'precipitation' was meant the projection of the Mahatma's thoughts through the ether or astral; on the way they formed themselves into a material letter, ink-written, enclosed in a real Chinese envelope.) The Society for Psychical Research sent an investigator, Richard Hodgson, to India to find out what he could and report back.

And after him, hurriedly, followed Mme Blavatsky to sue the missionaries for libel. These Coulomb letters were entirely forgeries, she declared.

But in India she was advised by her devoted followers, three of whom were lawyers, not to do anything of the sort; it would only lead to putting Koot Hoomi in the witness box, and the Masters would not like that. Mme Blavatsky desisted, to the disappointment of the missionaries who had been patiently waiting for her to attack. They decided to renew their offensive by suing General Morgan of the Indian Army, retired, for calling Mme Coulomb a liar and a thief, unless he apologized. The good general stuck to his guns and the solicitors of the missionary party issued their writ, a device solely to get the fabulous Mme Blavatsky with her unguarded tongue and explosive temper into the witness box. But the same day Mme Blavatsky fled back to Europe, never to return to India.

The Society for Psychical Research at last issued their report. In it they described Mme Blavatsky in terms which have helped to keep her memory green but which at the time she did not find flattering. 'For our own part, we regard her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think that she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors of history.'

The Secret Doctrine

But Mme Blavatsky was too ill with Bright's disease to care very much what they said about her. She wandered through Italy to Switzerland and Germany, and back to England where she settled down to write her masterpiece, *The Secret Doctrine*, an account of the root knowledge out of which all religion, philosophy and science have grown. It was all there for her to see in the Akashic Records for everything, going back to Noah, has been preserved. It was her answer to Richard Hodgson.

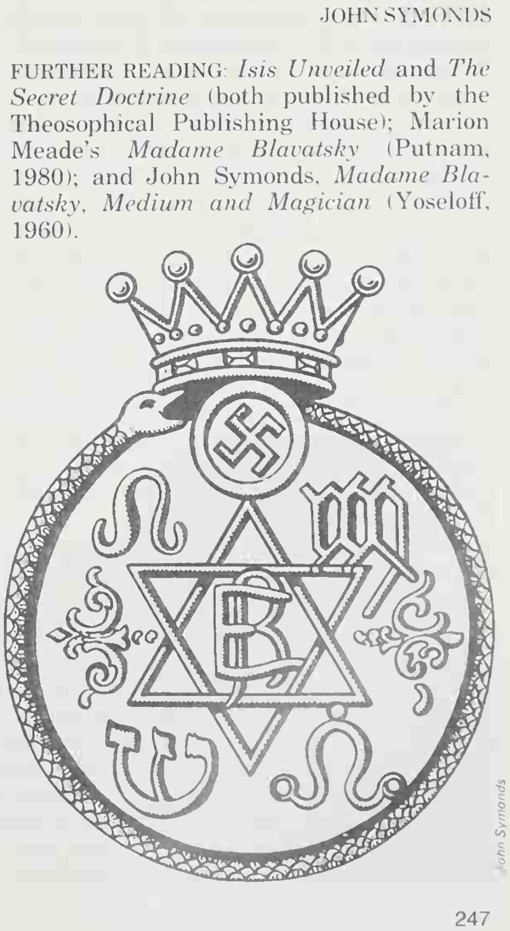
'I *live two lives again*,' she wrote to Alfred P. Sinnett, author of *The Occult World*, who had helped to build up the Theosophical Society. 'Master finds that it is too difficult for me to be looking consciously into the Astral Light for my *Secret Doctrine* and so, it is now about a fortnight, I am made to see all I have to as though in a dream.' She was looking into the collective unconscious and her Master was the archetype of the wise man.

She was visited by W. B. Yeats, who described her as 'a sort of old Irish peasant woman with an air of humour and audacious power.' Aleister Crowley, who followed in her footsteps, called her a high initiate, holding the grade equivalent to that of Master of the Temple.

(See also BESANT; THEOSOPHY.)

JOHN SYMONDS

FURTHER READING: *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* (both published by the Theosophical Publishing House); Marion Meade's *Madame Blavatsky* (Putnam, 1980); and John Symonds, *Madame Blavatsky, Medium and Magician* (Yoseloff, 1960).



John Symonds

Mme Blavatsky's mystic brooch, with her initials in a hexagram (spirit and matter interlocked) topped by a swastika (the ceaseless coming into being of life) enclosed in a snake swallowing its own tail (immortality), surmounted by the crown of perfection

BLOOD

CHEMICALLY, blood serum is almost identical with sea water, providing a clear indication of the marine origins of all living creatures, and it has been described, with good reason, as the 'river of life', for it courses through the body in an unending stream that terminates only with death.

Men observed long ago that bodily death involves the cessation of the flow of blood, and that when a man is wounded and loses blood, he weakens and dies. The natural result was the belief that a creature's blood is his life.

It is only a short step from the concept of blood as life to the identification of blood with the soul, which lies behind the fear of spilled blood. By impregnating the earth with the soul-blood of its owner, the blood is thought to threaten any one who treads on it. To neutralize the danger, it is necessary to destroy the blood, often with fire. The shedding of innocent blood on the ground could make the spot accursed for ever, for the outraged soul cried out for vengeance. There are many barren patches around the world where, for this reason according to tradition, no grass will grow. One of the better known is the grave in Montgomery, Wales, where William Davies, who was executed in 1821 for a crime of which he was almost certainly innocent, is buried.

The Animal Soul

Food taboos often arise directly from the concept of blood as the soul. The prohibitions against consuming the blood and flesh of certain animals, among the Jews and other peoples, testifies to the undying strength of this old belief. All such taboos are rooted in the belief that, if you drink the blood of an animal, its soul becomes absorbed into your own body. On the other hand, many communities ritually drink the blood of animals and men whose peculiar qualities they admire. The Norwegian hunters of old drank bear's blood to acquire the formidable strength of the bear, and in East Africa Masai warriors are known to invigorate themselves with draughts of the blood of lions.

As with animals, so with men. The head-hunters of the Central Celebes in the East Indies drank and ate human blood and brains so as to become brave, and in the initiation ceremonies of the aborigines of Central and Western Australia the young were anointed with the blood of the old and experienced men of the tribe.

Similarly, by drinking the blood of a god one might acquire his divine qualities. In the Christian Communion service the worshippers drink the wine which is symbolically the blood of Christ.

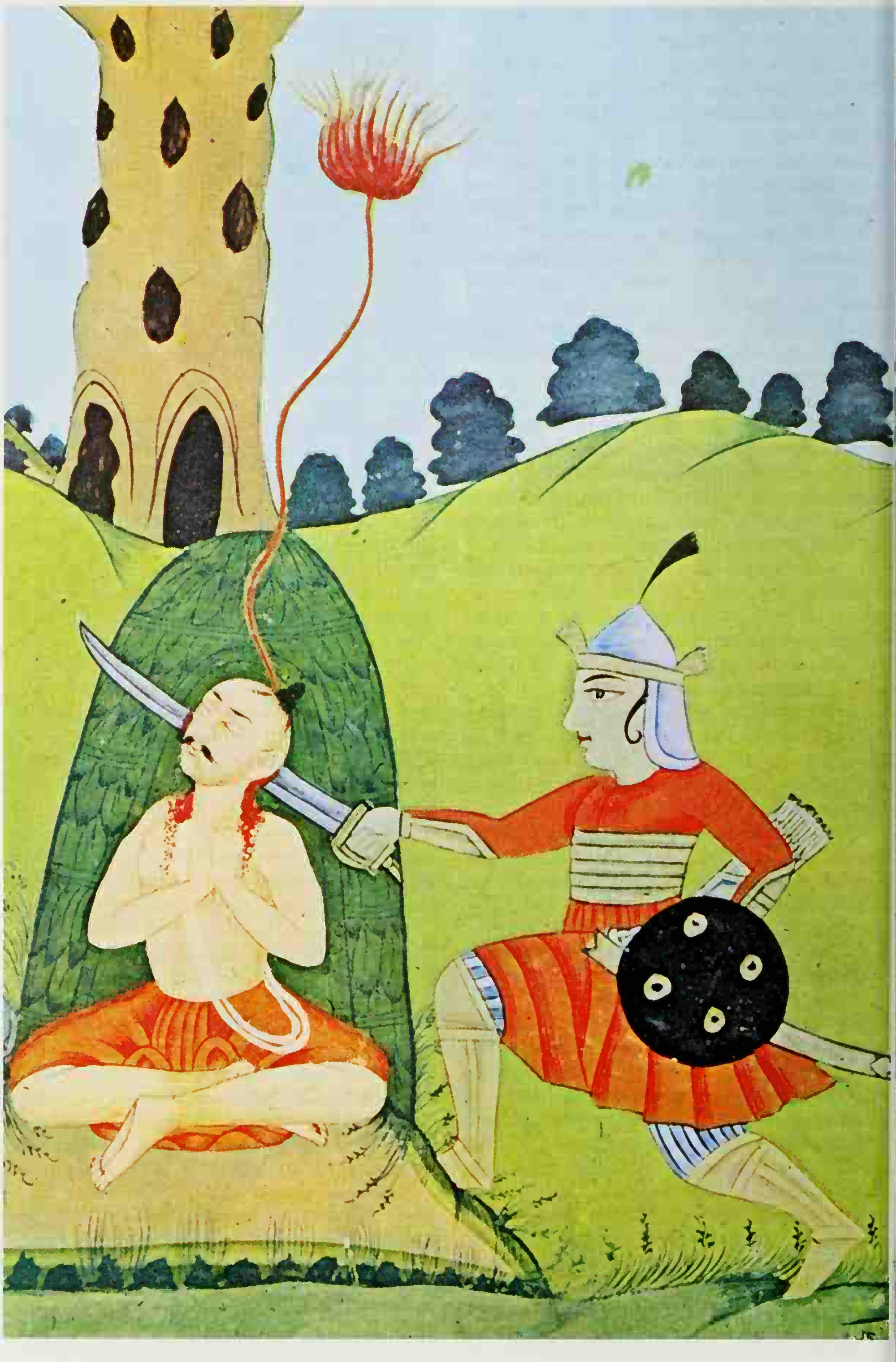
Integral with the worship of a deity is the concept of blood sacrifice, the victim being the first-born or the best, whose blood is shed to propitiate the god. The Vikings paid tribute to the gods of the sea by running their long ships over the bodies of prisoners, reddening the keels with their blood, a custom which survives symbolically in the ship-christening ceremony of today.

Blood was the essential factor in the human sacrifices of ancient Mexico and Peru in which thousands were killed to ensure a bountiful harvest. In every land primitive man has nourished the soil with the strength of human blood. (See also SACRIFICE).

Blood of the Hunted

Our ancestors were convinced that animals had ghosts and could haunt their murderers. The blood of the hunted, crying out for vengeance against the hunters, created terror in a world peopled by weak men and savage beasts. The Kayans of Borneo were haunted by the souls of the panthers they had killed, and for protection smeared themselves and their weapons with the blood of fowls, which was considered an effective defence against the ghosts.

One of the nightmares which have dominated the mind of man has been his fear of menstrual blood which, due possibly to its apparent abnormality and also to the fact that it emanates from the bodies of women (see WOMAN), has been considered to be



Since blood is life, it may also be the soul, the part of man which survives the death of the body. In the Indian Mahabharata, Drona prepares for death by collecting his soul together from all his limbs. As his head is cut off, the soul rises up like a column of blood-red flame

unnatural and sinister. It was sometimes assumed to be the result of the bite of an evil spirit or a snake, and many communities have regarded it as a blood sacrifice to the moon. Contact with menstrual blood could be extremely dangerous and as a precaution women have at various times been isolated, and even caged. The mere glance of a woman in her menses could be almost lethal and in many places menstruating women have been prevented from touching the earth with their feet, in case they should pollute the ground.

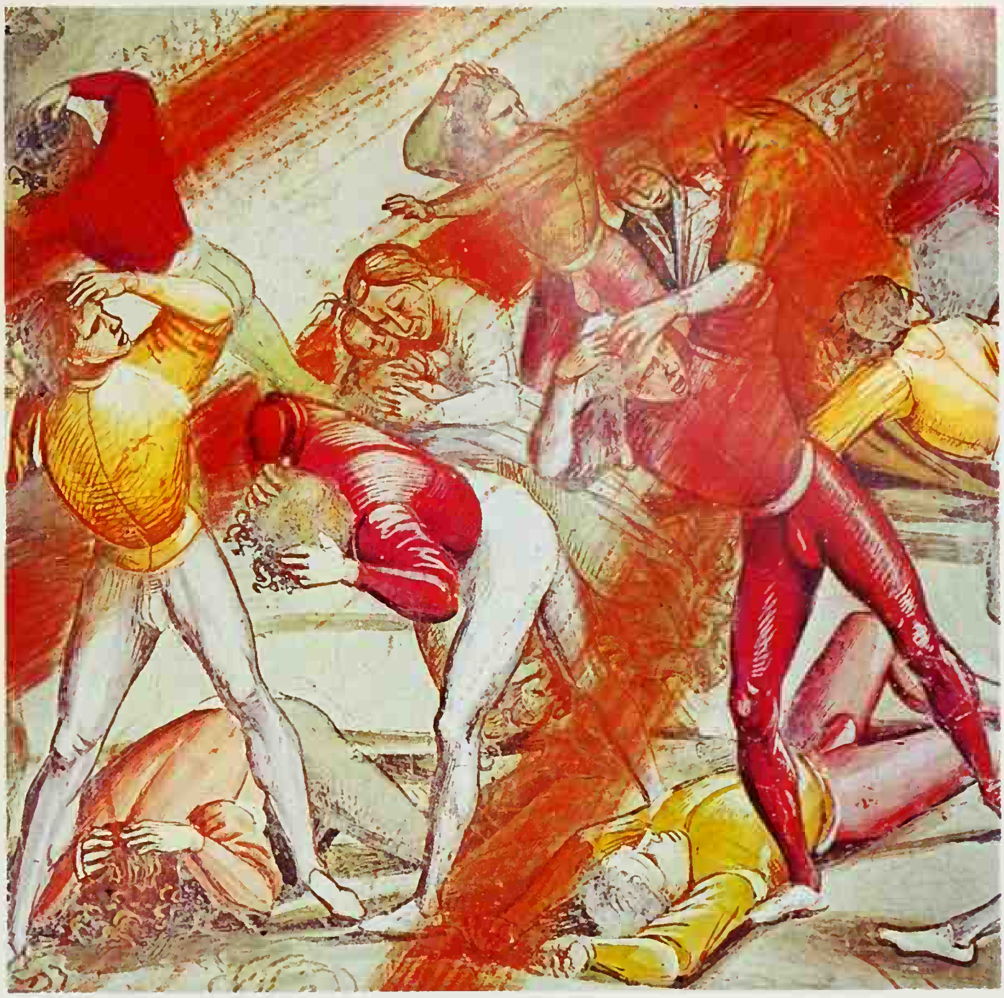
Scoring Above the Breath

According to popular belief, the magic power of a witch was contained in her blood and was transmitted to her children, its potency for evil remaining unimpaired unless destroyed by fire. The witch signed her pact with Satan in her blood and with this same blood she suckled her familiar imp. Matthew Hopkins, the self-appointed English 'Witch-Finder General', reported the case of the witch Elizabeth Clark, who fed her familiar Jamara, the legless spaniel, with her own blood, and the same accusation was made against many other witches.

Blood played as important a role in white magic as in black. A witch's power could be destroyed if she was 'scored above the breath', which meant tearing her forehead, mouth or nose until her face became bloody. The same method was employed by European peasants to combat werewolves. Blood combined with the hair, nail parings and urine of a bewitched person was used in the Witch Bottle, a device for breaking the spell of a witch. The bottle would be brought to the boil on the kitchen fire at midnight to the accompaniment of the Lord's Prayer said backwards, causing the witch dreadful agony and sometimes death.

The Powder of Sympathy

The belief that shed blood retains a connection with the person or animal from which it came lies behind the Sympathetic Powder made famous by Sir Kenelm Digby in 1661. According to Digby, a sick person could remain in his bed at home while his doctor applied the Sympathetic Powder to a portion of blood-stained bandage which had been delivered to him at his chambers, and a wound so treated would rapidly heal.


Scala

At the end of the world a hail of mingled fire and blood rains down on the earth: from Signorelli's *The Last Judgement* in Orvieto Cathedral

Sealing agreements by ceremonial use of blood is known as the Blood Covenant. Royal blood and the blood of chiefs is assumed to possess inherent qualities not shared by lesser mortals, and because of its sacred character must not be spilled. Kubla Khan, the 13th century Mongol emperor, in ordering the execution of a kinsman of noble blood, subscribed to this tradition by decreeing that the illustrious prisoner should be tossed to death in a blanket.

Out, Damned Spot!

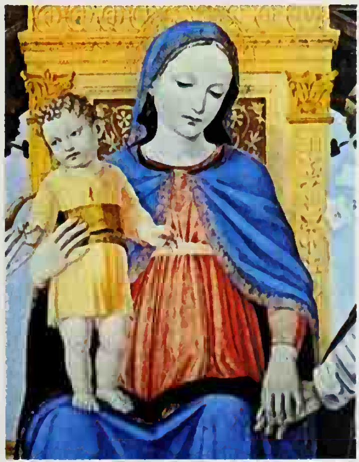
The old belief that blood cried out for vengeance persisted long both in folklore and in literature. Stories abound of murderers striving in vain to wash the guilty blood from their hands and clothing, or from the blood-stained ground. Such blood is believed to be indelible and forces the cry from the tortured lips of Lady Macbeth: 'Out, damned spot! Out, I say.' People believed that a corpse's blood knew its killer was, and suspects were made to touch it.

ERIC MAPLE

FURTHER READING: C. Hole ed., *Encyclopedia of Superstitions* (Hutchinson, 1961); B. Inglis, *A History of Medicine* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965); E. Maple, *Magic, Medicine and Quackery* (Hale, 1968); B. Seeman, *The River of Life* (Museum Press 1962).

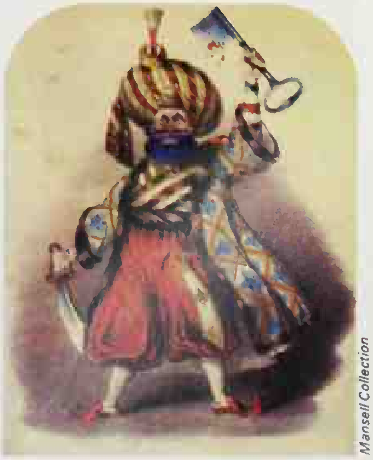
Blue

The colour of the sky and therefore of the planet Jupiter, named for the Roman god of the sky; in Christian symbolism the colour of eternity, faith, purity and modesty, and associated with the Virgin Mary; the phrase 'blue blood' was coined by Spanish aristocrats in the belief that their veins were bluer than those of people contaminated by Moorish blood; politically the colour of conservatism, as against the red of revolution. See COLOURS; CORRESPONDENCES.


Michael Holford

Bluebeard

Villain of European folk tales, so named from the colour of his beard, who murdered his numerous wives and kept their bodies in a locked room; the story appears in Charles Perrault's *Contes du Temps* (1697) and may be based on the crimes of the mass-murderer Gilles de Rais, executed at Nantes in 1440. See GILLES DE RAIS.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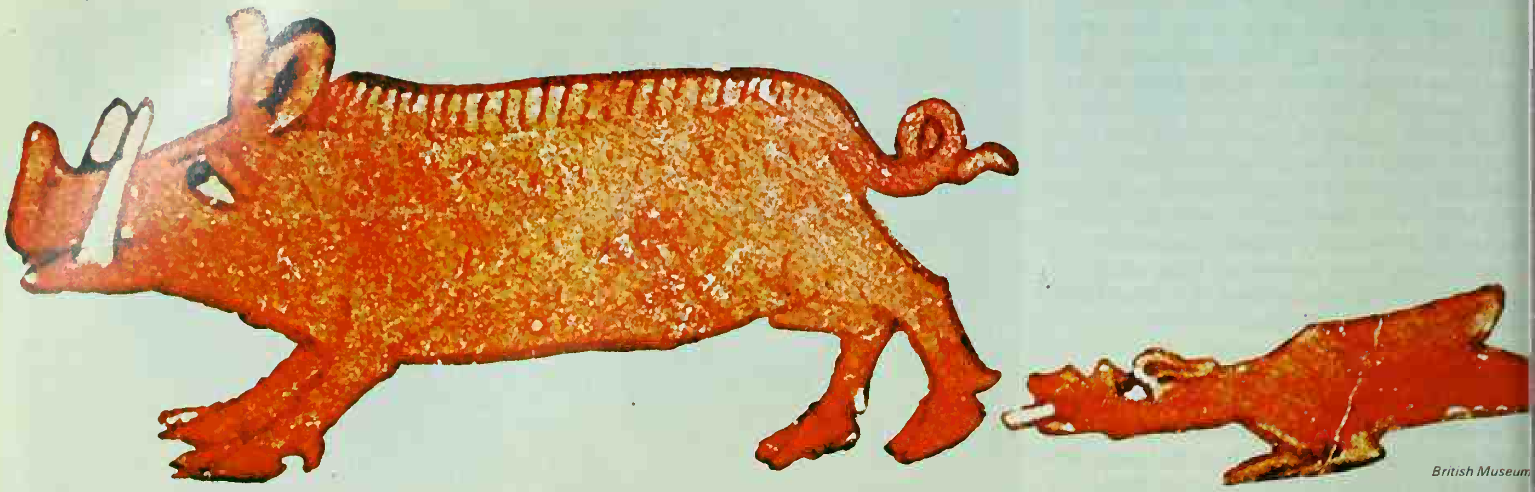


British Museum

The ferocity of the wild boar made it a symbol of death and destruction, and an enemy of the gods. But it was also a symbol of fertility and the boar's head on a warrior's helmet or shield was thought to protect him by giving him the beast's courage and strength

'A boar is a sovereign beast', an emblem of courage and ferocity, the most dangerous of animals for the hunter, and the slayer of men and even of gods. It is sometimes an incarnation of evil, sometimes an embodiment of the dead, sometimes a symbol of the fertility of the earth. A fiercely tusked boar, from a manuscript in the British Museum, with a wyvern, a two-legged dragon with barbed tail and wings

BOAR

THE POWER AND FURY of the 'sovereign beast' have given the wild boar a wealth of symbolism, from Iceland to India, and a vast and tenacious body of folklore and legend. The ancient words of the Boar's Head Carol recall the traditional festivities of Christmas and its pagan predecessor, the winter feast of Yule.

> A boar is a sovereign beast
> And acceptable in every feast;
> So might this Lord be to most and least;
> Nowell, nowelle.
> This boar's head we bring with song
> In worship of him that thus sprang
> Out of a virgin to redress all wrong;
> Nowell, nowelle.

From antiquity to the Middle Ages and later, the boar was first of all a symbol of the fertility of the earth. In Germany when the corn waved, it was once said, 'The Boar is rushing through the corn' and children were warned, 'Don't go through the corn, there's a boar in there.' The last sheaf at harvest (sometimes called 'the Sow') was saved, and from it was made a loaf in the form of a boar; this was placed on the Yule table until the end of the festive season. It was then kept until the spring sowing, when part would be eaten, and part mixed with the seed-corn to ensure a healthy crop. A comparison may be drawn with the Scandinavian Yule custom of drinking and eating to a good agricultural year and to peace.

The idea of sacrifice in the dead of winter to the fertility deities was not far off, though there is little direct evidence on this point. But the boar was the sacred animal of the fertility god Freyr in Scandinavian mythology. Snorri's *Edda* tells how Freyr rode to Balder's funeral (see BALDER) behind the boar Gollinborsti (golden bristles), also known as 'the one with terrible tusks'. Another boar mentioned in the Eddic literature (the source books of Scandinavian mythology) is Saehrimnir, the boar which was killed and eaten afresh every day by the dead heroes in Valhalla.

Fertility and Death

The boar was thus also connected in the mythology of many peoples with the symbolism of death and the dead. In Northern Europe and Scandinavia the boar, representing the souls of the departed, was believed to run on the storm-clouds as part of Odin's wild hunt. Here we can recognize the curious tension between fertility and destruction that was characteristic of many early mythologies. The Roman historian Tacitus said that the Aestii (a tribe in north-eastern Germany) 'worship the Mother of the gods. They wear, as emblem of this cult, the masks of boars, which stand them in stead of armour or human protection and ensure the safety of the worshipper . . .', which suggests this ambivalence. The dual, life and death, aspect of the mother goddess and related fertility deities is well known.

The wearing of armour, especially helmets, shaped in the form of a boar's head or ornamented with boar's tusks, is attested at least as far back as Mycenean Greece. The position of the boar in Greek mythology, and its connection with the gods, is illustrated by such episodes as that of the Calydonian boar-hunt in the *Iliad* (book 10). Among European archeological finds of recent years was the boar's head helmet found at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk in 1939. The object of this ornamentation was probably magical. The boar symbol was also emblazoned on shields and standards even in pre-Christian Europe, and the use of the boar emblem *(sanglier)* in European heraldry is to be traced back to this source. The most famous wearer of this device was the English king Richard III.

The Boar of Evil

In the ancient Near East, the boar's various aspects as a fertility symbol, symbol of death, and animal of the hunt were also well marked, though among Semitic and Egyptian peoples its character as an embodiment of evil tended to be stressed. Semitic peoples, it seems, have always regarded the pig as unclean, and have refused to have anything to do with it. This was probably because it was originally a sacred animal: the Greek writer Plutarch could not decide whether the Jews worshipped or abominated it. Among peoples who refused (and in some cases still refuse) to eat pork were the Cretans, Syrians, Phoenicians, Egyptians and Ethiopians, as well as the Jews and Moslems (see PIG).

Legends of gods slain by boars, or while boar-hunting, are numerous. Adonis, consort of Aphrodite and Attis, consort of Cybele, both met their end in this way. The same may be true of the Egyptian god Osiris, though the evidence here is scanty. The Cretans held that Zeus himself was a prince ripped up by a wild boar and buried in their midst. This assertion is supposed to have earned them their traditional reputation as liars.

Thus the boar came to be the incarnation of the enemy of the gods; in Egypt, for example, the evil god Set was porcine in form. Traces of a similar conception in the West can be found in traditions of Odin's wild hunt, and in the story of King Arthur's boar-hunt, in which the fabulous boar is the emissary of Satan, to be overcome not by force, but by prayer. Comparable accounts of boar-hunts are found in many medieval texts, among them the French *Song of Roland*, the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone*, the *Romance of Sir Eglamour* and the German *Nibelungenlied*.

In India, though the volume of material is far less than in Europe, one of the incarnations of the god Vishnu was as a boar, while an Indian creation legend tells how the god Brahma, in the form of a boar, lifted up the earth on his back from the waters of the primeval flood.

The power and potency of this sacred animal was believed in many parts of the world to be a source of magical aid. Boars tusks and hooves were used as amulets while an infusion of boar's tusk could help cure all manner of ailments, from epilepsy and toothache to 'the twinges'.

ERIC J. SHARPE

'We carry within us the wonders we seek without.' In occultism, the human body has powers far beyond those with which it is normally credited. It is the axis of the universe, the centre of existence, and has attracted to itself a wealth of magical beliefs and practices

BODY

TO THE OCCULTIST, the human body represents, in the language of physics, a field of force. Its limbs and organs are connected as if by invisible cables to the infinite complex of a vast hidden world, and bodily actions can send out powerful streams of energy. This idea is one which is ancient and widespread. The human voice, say the Arabs, is the most potent sound on earth. Human blood, said the Aztecs, provides nourishment for the sun. Human breath, says yoga, is part of the divine current. 'We carry within us,' declared Sir Thomas Browne in the 17th century, 'the wonders we seek without. There is all Africa and her prodigies in us.'

Physical exercises, concerned with controlling the functions and processes of the body, form an important part of the discipline of yoga, but they constitute far more than a physiological regimen. Some yoga exercises become timeless moments of profound significance. Used with breathing techniques (see BREATH), they set up subtle reverberations in and around the body, finding a response in the spiritual spheres and bringing enlightenment and power.

Ancient and medieval thinkers speculating about the precise location of the intellectual and spiritual faculties of man came up with some unusual theories of their own. The midriff became the seat of reason, the gall bladder the seat of determination, the 'guts' the seat of courage, the liver the seat of the emotions. According to the Hindu manuals on yoga, the sahasrara or 'mental plexus', the centre controlling the human psyche, was situated just above the head, in a position roughly corresponding to the halo of the Christian saint.

The Arab physician Avicenna (d 1037) maintained that the brain was no more than a cooling system for psychic operations that took place elsewhere. On the other hand, the Alexandrian physician Galen, in the 2nd century AD, thought that the highest mystical experiences were centred in the ventricles of the brain, which he believed to be entirely empty spaces within the cranium.

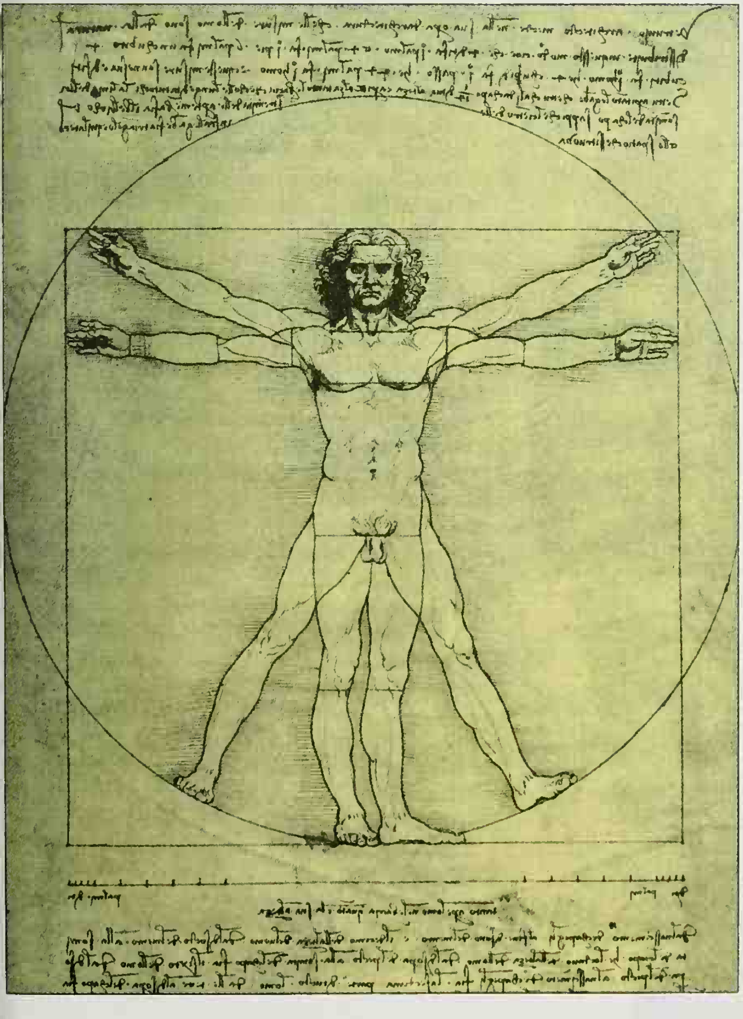
The Ladder of the Spine

The brain is the efflorescence, the bursting into flower, of the spine. In ancient Egypt the symbol known as the Tet pillar was said to represent, among other things, the spine of the God Osiris, and in abbreviated form was worn as a magical amulet. The vertebrae marked the stations of a mystical ladder for the ascent of vital forces in certain occult exercises. Occultists therefore regard the backbone as the main channel for the flow downward of forces from the mental plexus, and for the flow upward through the feet of energy from the earth.

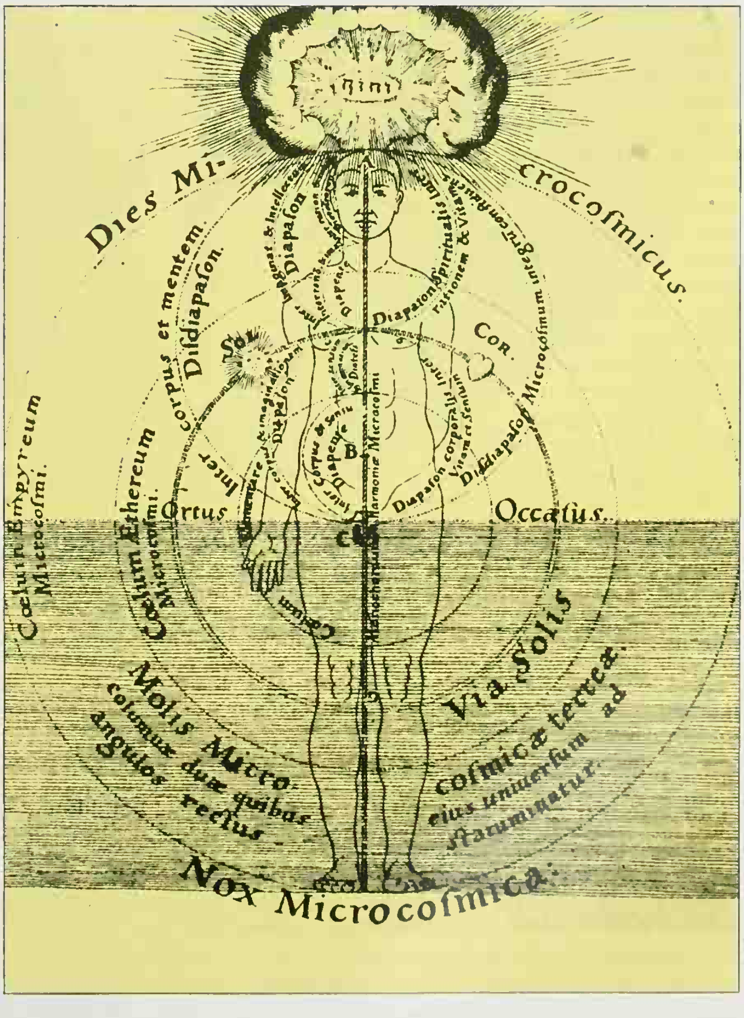
So we find the feet too playing a role in occultism. They form the natural point of contact with Mother Earth. Those who are psychically depleted are advised to walk with bare feet on freshly-ploughed land to replenish their energies. The soles of the feet send down, as it were, invisible roots to the nourishing soil, from which vitalizing pulsations are sent surging up through the body. This age-old notion still prevails in many parts of the world.

As the feet reach down, so the hands reach out. When man first stood erect and freed his hands for work, he set out on his march to progress. If civilization was conceived in the brain, it has been achieved by the hands and in the final analysis, it is the hand that has changed human destiny. Inevitably therefore, the hand plays a major role in occultism. In ancient Greece the man with a defective voice could not participate in the inner mysteries of Eleusis, but the man with a deformed hand

Below left The outstretched arms and legs of a man form a square and a circle: the square symbolizes the solid physical world, and the circle the spiritual and eternal. Man bridges the gap between these two worlds. Leonardo da Vinci, _The Magical Proportions of Man_
Below right In Robert Fludd's diagram, _The Harmonic Intervals of Man_, all aspects of the universe have their counterparts in the human body. The day in man is the upper half of the body and night the lower half; the sun is represented by the heart. The harmony above is reflected in the harmony of the body



Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice


Dies Microcosmicus.
Cor.
Sol
Diapason
Disdiapason
corpus et mentem
B
Ortus
Occasus.
Cœlum Empyreum Microcosmi.
Cœlum Æthereum Microcosmi.
Molis Microcosmicæ columnæ duæ quibus angulos rectus
Via Solis
cosmicæ terreæ eius universum ad
Nox Microcosmica.

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could never hold high office in any ancient priesthood.

Great psychic powers are believed to flow through the hand. The currents are concentrated in the palm and from there are directed to their destination by way of the fingers, poised in symbolic gestures, to bless, to curse, to heal, to hurt. Here, as in all occult rites, intent is the mainspring of the ceremony. In Hindu occult practice, the fingers of the hand are made to assume standard classic positions or flexes known as *mudras* and each mudra is believed to represent a concentration of specific forces (see GESTURE).

The Ear-Torn Yogis

Among the organs of sense, the eyes and the ears hold the supreme place in occultism. The eye does more than enable one to see; it modifies the external world. The Chinese philosopher Lao Tse would call it an obscuring element, for the eye blinds rather than enlightens. It limits the range of our vision, filtering and keeping out much that would give us a truer picture of the universe. Another school would call it an active agent, a torch in a world that would be dark without it. Leonardo da Vinci held that an intellectual force emanated from the eye.

To those who belive in the Evil Eye, it can be suffused with hatred or envy, and send forth a malignant flash that can sear and blight.

In Buddhist writings, the ear rather than the eye is considered the more 'sensual' organ, for men are very susceptible to the lure of speech and music, by means of which they are easily influenced. The ear opens up a world of understanding unique in man's experience, and all esoteric schools speak of the potency of Sound, the Word and the Name. Many peoples regard large ears as a sign of spiritual development. The mysterious statues on Easter Island are said to represent an extinct caste of Long Ears. The Inca nobles were known to the Spaniards as *Orejones*, or Big Ears, because they cultivated long ears by pulling and stretching them from infancy. Of the few authentic personal descriptions of Buddha, one says that he had long ear-lobes.

According to yoga, the ear is connected by a network of invisible ganglia to the subtle organs of perception, and the power of the *mantra* or magic formula, whispered into the ear of the new convert, can bring instant spiritual enlightenment. A greatly dreaded class of Hindu wonder-workers, known as the Kanphata or 'ear-torn' yogis, base their cult doctrine on this power of the ear. They perforate the cartilage of the ear and wear huge earrings in a ceremony of initiation that goes back to very ancient times. The blood spilt during the rite is believed to flow direct from a hidden channel: it is used to anoint the head and is then rubbed into the scalp.

The Plexuses

Man is said to have not one but several bodies. Exponents of esoteric doctrine refer to bodies distinct from the material structure of bone and flesh, which lie enmeshed within the human frame (see ASTRAL BODY). The physical and the subtle or 'astral' bodies are believed to have points of contact. These junctions, known as plexuses in the West and *chakras* in Hinduism, form a major branch of occult study. The theory of the plexuses was intricately elaborated in Hindu occultism, according to which there are 88,000 chakras in the human body. Actually only about 30 are named, and only six or seven are described in any detail.

Belief in the plexuses has had a remarkable diffusion. In one form or another they were known to the ancient Egyptians, the Chinese and even the Mayas in Central America. From Egypt the theory probably spread, by way of the Hellenic world and Byzantium, to the Hesychasts, an order of monks in modern Greece, who distinguish six such plexuses; the forehead, throat, heart, solar plexus, sex organs and 'tail'.

It will be seen that to the occultist the body has a widely ranging significance. In one sense it lies at the very centre of the profound enigma of existence. Taken as a functioning unit, the human body is believed to be endowed with mystical power. Bodily actions performed with intent have a ritual meaning and breach the frontiers of the occult world; and the limbs and organs have a hidden function quite apart from their practical purpose. These considerations help us to catch a glimmer of the 'rationality' underlying superstitious beliefs, magical practices and the so-called crypto-sciences— water-divining, for instance, palmistry or divination by the moles on the face—no less than the ritual laying-on of hands in orthodox religion or the use of the female nude as a living altar in the Black Mass.

Little stone *ushabti* figures were placed in ancient Egyptian tombs to give the dead man a substitute body, which would carry out any task demanded of him in the afterworld

William Macquitty

Mutilation and Sex

There is scarcely a part of the body that has not been subjected at one time or another to interference because of some esoteric notion. For a variety of reasons communities throughout the world have sanctioned such practices as branding, tattooing, circumcision, flaying and maiming. The hair was shorn because of one belief, or allowed to grow because of another. The skull was trepanned to let the soul out, a scalp-lock grown to keep the soul in. The teeth were knocked out, the face and limbs scarified, the fingers chopped off, the head deformed. In various countries the female pudenda were snipped, burned, stitched or even secured with a padlock.

After all such mutilations have been accounted for in terms of hygiene, aesthetics, proprietary rites or pleasure, there still remains a large unexplained area that can only be understood against a religious or occult background.

Sex figures prominently in contemporary psychology but to the occultist, who claims to know in his own way as much about the subject as the psychologist, the 'sensations' of sex and the consequences of repressing the sex instinct are of hardly any concern. Phallus and vulva are the instruments of a union in which frustration or pleasure, or even procreation, are only side issues. Gender is used as a means of fusing two polarities or opposites into a highly-charged unity, whose potential can be directed to a purpose that has no sexual element in it (see OPPOSITES).

But again, man is a double-sexed creature, self-sufficient if he but knew it, and continence is a high explosive. Little more need be said here, except that sexual activity in any form, autosexual, homosexual or heterosexual, as well as the deliberate control of sexual activity as in asceticism, are regarded by 'left-hand' occultists as capable of being used for magical operations of a particularly unpleasant nature.

The human body is at the centre of a web of intangible affinities. The mortal frame of man, say students of the subject, embodies the mysteries of creation. Man is the prime *axis mundi*, the great cross-point of the universe, and a true understanding of himself will open the door to all arcane knowledge. The functioning human body, man in action, reflects all the manifold features of the universe.

Every part of man is imbued with the radiations of the spiritual world, every gesture informed with occult potency. Man is a living talisman. (See also INITIATION; MACROCOSM; MAN; MUTILATION; SEX; TATTOOING; and articles on parts of the body.)

BENJAMIN WALKER

Michael Holford

Bodhisattva

One who is on the way to becoming a Buddha, as a result of the merit he has gained in past lives; when he has mastered 'the six perfections', he has escaped from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, and now chooses where to be reborn so as to do the most good; he eventually becomes a Buddha unless, like the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama in Tibet, he has vowed to remain on earth until all living beings have reached enlightenment.
See BUDDHISM.

The writings of a mystic who began life as a cowherd in a German village have influenced modern philosophy and religious thought. In the early 17th century Jacob Boehme tried to grapple with a world full of evil and a God who seemed far away

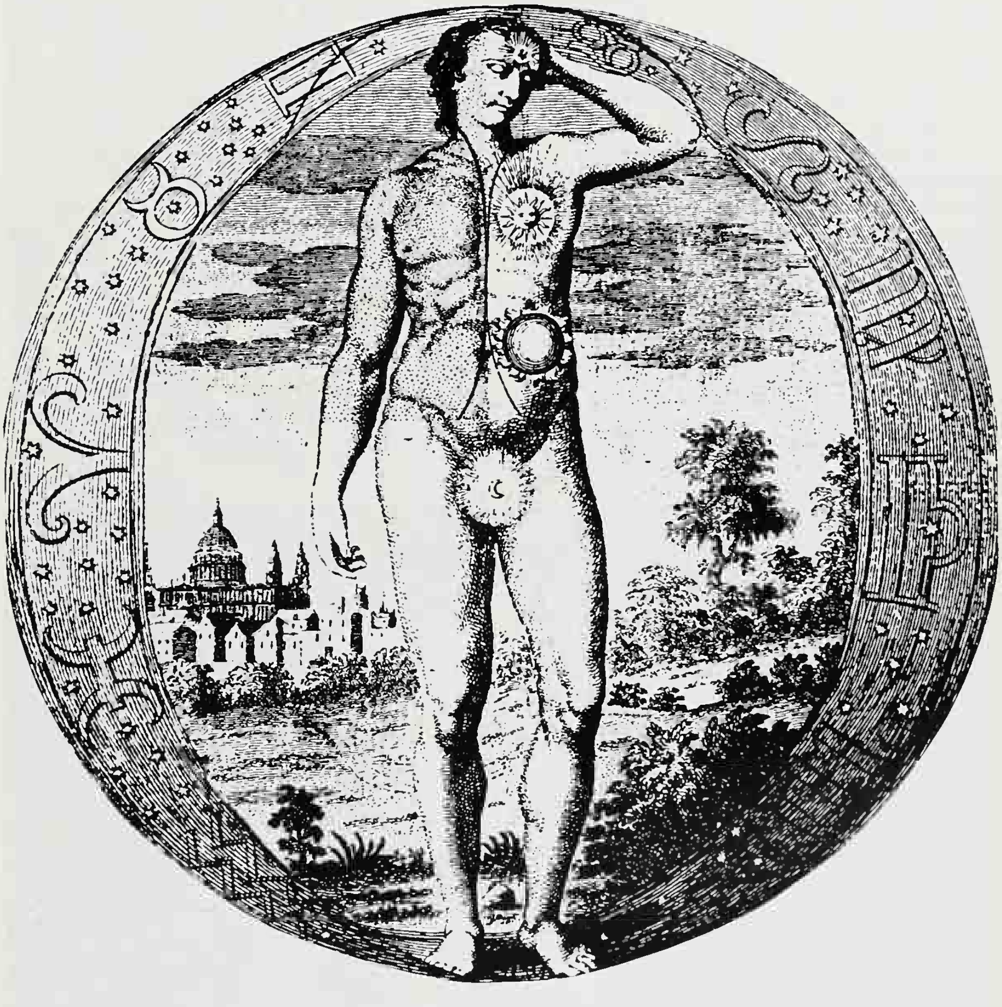
JACOB BOEHME

AT THE AGE OF 25 a German shoemaker named Jacob Boehme had a mystical experience which influenced him for the rest of his life. 'What kind of spiritual triumph it was,' he said in his first book, *Aurora*, written in 1612, 'I can neither write nor speak; it can only be compared with that where life is born in the midst of death, and is like the resurrection of the dead.' Boehme experienced several of these 'illuminations', one of which was stimulated by the simple sight of light playing on the surface of a pewter dish. The effect on him was often to make him write 'like a downpour'.

The son of a prosperous farmer, Boehme was born in 1575 at Alt-Seidenberg, near Görlitz in Silesia. He became a master cobbler, married and had four children. His *Aurora* so disturbed the Chief Pastor and the town council of Görlitz that he was forbidden to write any more. In 1613 he sold his business and travelled around Germany, visiting his friends and supporters, and trading in yarn and woollen gloves. In 1619 he wrote his second book, *The Three Principles of the Divine Essence*, and from then until his death in 1624 he wrote some 30 books and pamphlets.

Sidney Spencer, in his book *Mysticism and World Religion*, calls Boehme 'by far the greatest and most original of Protestant mystics . Boehme's thought was rooted in his own deep piety, his devotion to the Lutheran Church to which he remained faithful all his life, and his intensive study of Luther's translation of the Bible.

He was well versed in astronomy, in the writings of the alchemist and philosopher Paracelsus (see PARACELSUS), and in the ideas and symbolism of alchemy and the Cabala. He was also influenced by the mystical tradition stemming from his famous predecessor Meister Eckhart (see ECKHART), which stressed the need for faith in God and surrender to God.



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Boehme accepted the old belief that man is a miniature copy of God and the universe, hence the symbols of planets as the vital centres of the human body in this illustration to an 18th century edition of his works

Wrestling with God

In *Aurora* (chapter 19) Boehme explains the spiritual and intellectual predicament which started him on his quest for truth. It is at once very personal and very typical of the period. He believed that God dwelt in a remote place beyond the stars (as all astronomers taught, certainly until the time of Kepler). Feeling that God was far away, he saw around him a world in which evil flourished, which contained both '*good and evil*, love and anger . . . and that it went *well* in this world with the wicked as with the virtuous.'

Perplexed and melancholy, Boehme resolved 'to wrestle with the love and the mercy of God', as Jacob in the Bible had wrestled with the angel of God. The result of this spiritual wrestling was the experience of breaking through 'the gates of hell, even into the innermost birth and geniture of the Deity, and there I was *embraced* with love, as a bridegroom embraceth his dearly beloved bride.'

The problems which most oppressed Boehme were the power of evil in the world and the harsh doctrine of predestination, which appeared to leave no room for human free will. He coped with these problems by recognizing a harmonious tension between opposites – good and evil, human freedom and the will of God – underlying all existence. 'In yes and no,' he said, 'all things subsist'. (See OPPOSITES, PREDESTINATION.)

In man, Boehme thought, the harmonious balance of opposites is upset only when human free will commits itself to self-centredness and cuts itself off from God's will. Then the forces within a man turn against each other in poisonous and frenzied conflict, and the 'divine essence' in man is sick unto death, unless the will renounces self-centredness and turns back to God.

Boehme felt himself called to impart his ideas to whoever would listen, to warn them against impending disaster unless they repented. He hoped to inaugurate a general reformation of Christendom and the reunion of Protestants and Roman Catholics. In fact he was bitterly attacked but his writings influenced later philosophers and mystics, including Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietszche in Germany, and the Quakers, William Law and William Blake in England.

By Boehme's time the Renaissance had produced a view of the world which had developed from, but in some ways challenged, previously accepted ideas. He attempted to combine new knowledge about the universe with older cosmological and mystical traditions to understand more fully the world he lived in. His framework was the belief that man is a miniature copy of the universe and of God (see MACROCOSM).

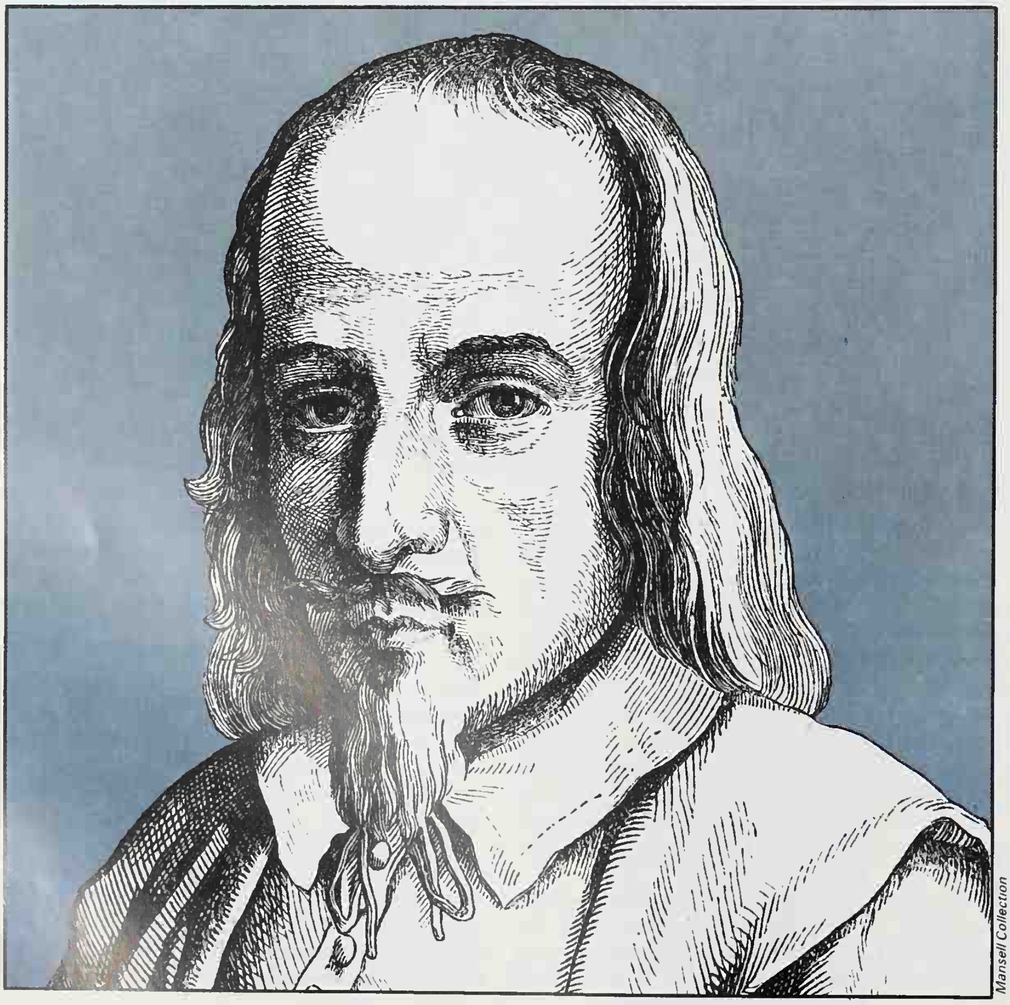
For example, God in Christian theory is threefold – the Trinity. The heavens, Boehme thought, are also threefold. The sky represents God the Father. The sun which is the sky's 'heart' represents Christ, who is the 'heart' of the Father, his centre of love, light and the creative energy which sustains all life in the world. The light from the heavenly bodies represents the Holy Spirit.

Just as God is threefold so man, being created in the image of God, is threefold. This is the basis of Boehme's theory of the three births. The 'elemental birth' gives man his body. The 'astral birth' gives him his instincts and intelligence, which he shares with the other animals. But unlike them, man is called to control the forces within him: if he does not, he is no better than a beast. The 'spiritual birth' gives man the 'divine essence', the ingredient in him which is potentially God.

Lucifer, Adam, Christ

God created Adam to replace Lucifer, the archangel who had fallen because he tried to exalt himself against God. But because Adam sinned in Eden, he also fell and man was expelled from Paradise. To rescue mankind, God sent into the world Christ, the second Adam, the God-man, the 'heart' of the Father. The 'divine essence' in each man must be saved through the entry of Christ into all human thought and action. Man must die to self-centredness and enter a state of total surrender, a state of harmony within himself and with the divine will. In this state he is 'reborn'. For Boehme, as for Paracelsus and the alchemists, rebirth is at the heart of all processes, both in man and in the universe.

Jacob Boehme: he had an intense spiritual experience during which he believed that he was in the presence of God and was *'embraced with love, as a bridegroom embraceth his dearly beloved bride'*



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Eternal Unity

In trying to explain how God, who is invisible, infinite and eternal, created and pervades a world which is visible, material and limited in space and time, Boehme made use of alchemical and cabalistic symbolism in his theory of the seven 'properties' of Nature. He linked these properties with the planets and metals of astrology and alchemy.

At the basis of everything that exists is the 'abyss' or 'ground' (*Ungrund* in German), the 'eternal stillness' which is not existence but the potentiality of existence. It contracts or coagulates, giving rise to the first property of Nature (corresponding to Saturn and lead), the second (Mercury, quicksilver) and the third (Mars, iron). These three properties are the salt, mercury and sulphur of Paracelsan alchemy, the substances of which everything is made. Dark, bitter, hungering for power and yet expending it, these three properties promote the coming into being and the shaping of all things. In the fourth property (Sun, gold) there is a lightning flash, a purifying fire of wrath and judgement which is transformed into the fire of love in the fifth property (Venus, copper). The sixth property (Jupiter, tin) communicates joy in speech and song. The seventh (Moon, silver) is the 'house' or 'container' for all the rest and in it we rejoin the first property for the seven properties really constitute an eternal unity.

Through these properties God unfolds and reveals himself in the material world. In them he contemplates himself as in a mirror. But in looking into the mirror, he is not merely looking at himself and his wisdom and glory. His very looking is an exercise of his loving, creative power, calling up further spheres of existence. Each of these embodies the same process of self-realization, from the inarticulate but potent 'ground', through the purifying fire of the fourth property to the song of praise in the sixth and the unity of the seventh.

It is this same process through which the mystic passes on his way to God.

H. POPPER

FURTHER READING: Boehme's *Aurora* and *Mysterium Magnum* have been reprinted in English (Hillary, 1960 and John M. Watkins, London, 1965, respectively); *Signatura Rerum, Supersensual Life* and *Of Heaven and Hell* were reprinted in the Everyman series (1912, 1926, 1934). For Boehme's life and thought, see F. Hartmann, *Jacob Boehme* (Steinerbooks, 1981), and J. J. Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity* (AMS Press) with full bibliography. For his influence in England, see S. Hobhouse ed., *Selected Mystical Writings of William Law* (Rockcliff, London, 4th edn, 1949) and D. Hirst, *Hidden Riches* (Barnes & Noble, 1964). See also S. Spencer, *Mysticism in World Religion* (Peter Smith).

A heretical sect, the Bogomils held that the visible world had been created by the Devil and that all matter was therefore inherently evil. Because of their rejection of orthodox Christian principles, they were accused of sexual immorality, witchcraft and magic

BOGOMILS

THE BOGOMILS WERE a religious sect founded in Bulgaria in the 10th century, which during the Middle Ages won many followers in the southern Balkans and Asia Minor, and influenced later religious movements in western Europe.

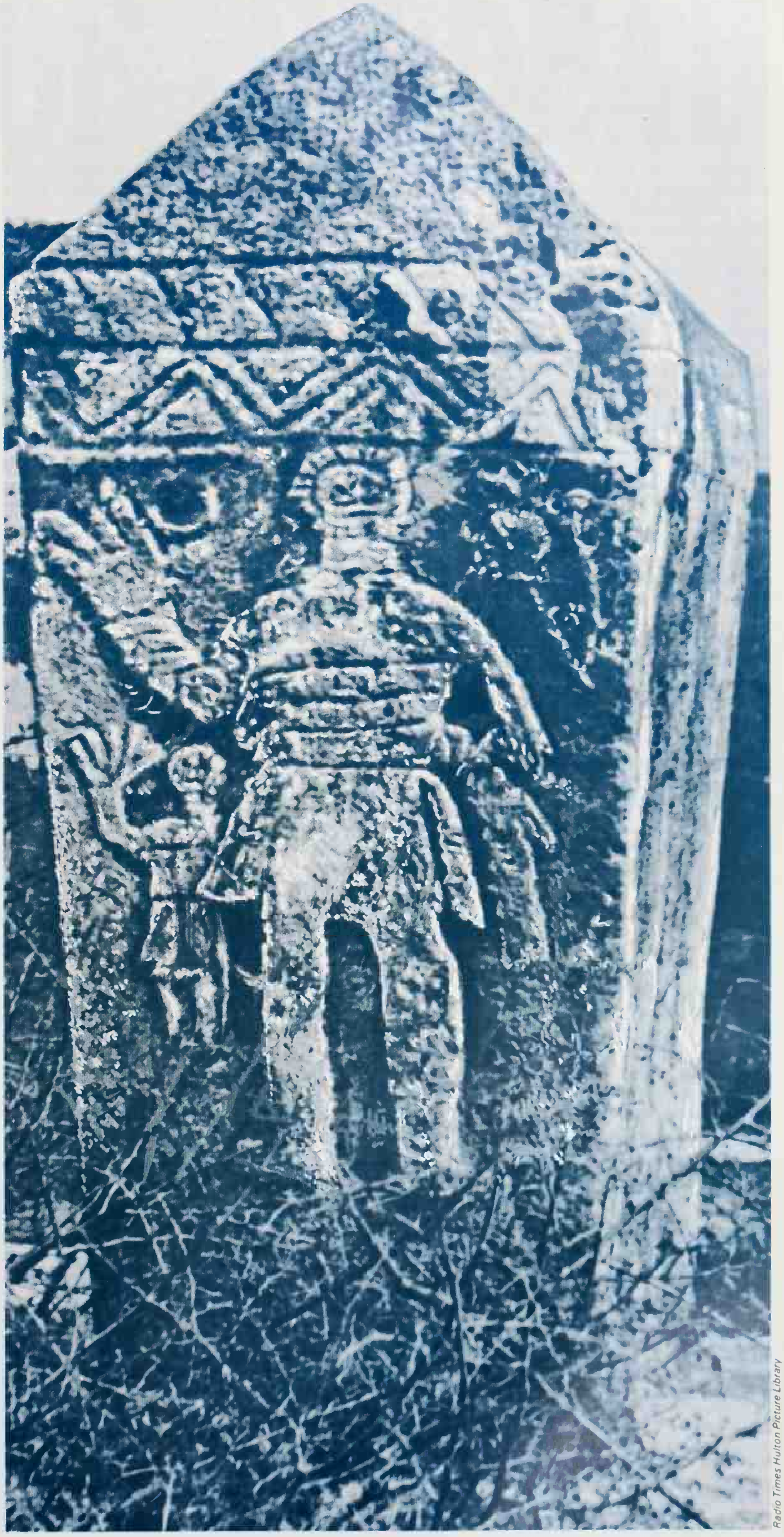
The Bogomil doctrine was founded on the belief, taken over from much older heresies, that there are two creative agents at work in the universe, one good and the other evil. This was made the basis of a moral code enjoining complete denial of the flesh and a religious system that combined an allegorical interpretation of the New Testament and orthodox Christian dogma with a novel and extravagant mythology.

Because they believed that matter was irredeemably evil, the Bogomils rejected marriage and the procreation of children, forbade the eating of meat and drinking of wine, and condemned manual labour. They also opposed the established Church and poured scorn and ridicule on the rich and powerful of the day. They were persecuted by the authorities, and in Constantinople, particularly, some of them were tortured, imprisoned or put to death.

It is probable that they had two different sets of teaching, one for ordinary converts who were not strictly bound by the code of sexual and dietary abstinence, and the other, which included secret interpretations of the Holy Scriptures, divulged only to 'perfect' initiates. In later times, they lost their early reputation for extreme asceticism, and were accused of vice and sexual excesses, as well as the practice of magic, soothsaying and witchcraft.

According to the most likely account, Bogomilism was founded by a Bulgarian village priest named Bogomil, who preached about the year 940. Apart from the doctrines attributed to him by another Bulgarian priest, Kozma, whose *Sermon against the Heretics* (c970) containing 16 formal curses to be pronounced against the Bogomils is the earliest first-hand account of the sect, nothing is known about Bogomil. His very existence has even been doubted by some historians.

Bulgaria had become officially Christian in the year 865, with the sudden conversion of the Khan Boris. But for the majority of Bulgarians, who up to that time were pagans, the new religion was imposed too swiftly and



Although Bogomilism was a Christian heresy, there is little sign of Christian influence in this 13th century tombstone in a Bogomil cemetery in Yugoslavia: even the sign of the cross was rejected by members of the sect, who believed that the Holy Cross on which Christ had been crucified had been made by Satan and was detested by God

Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

forcibly to take firm hold. From the beginning, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church had to combat both the older pagan cults and various Christian heresies brought to the Balkans by settlers from Asia.

Bogomilism can be regarded as one of a series of attempts throughout history to blend Christian and dualistic beliefs. Dualism – the recognition of two independent principles of good and evil in the universe – is older than Christianity, but its immediate source for the Bogomils was Paulicianism, a Christian heresy which reached the Balkans from Armenia, where it had grown up under the influence of doctrines that had originally nothing to do with Christianity and were, in fact, radically opposed to it.

According to the Bogomil version of this dualism, there was on the one hand a good deity, called God, invisible, immaterial, perfect and merciful, who created light. On the other hand, an evil power called Satan, the Devil, *Lukavii* 'the deceiver', or *Nechestivii* 'the filthy one', was the creator of darkness, matter and the entire visible world, including the sun, the stars, the earth, human beings, the Church and the cross. The Bogomils believed that the Devil, whose original name was Satanael, was the elder son of God and that Christ was the younger. Bogomil dualism differed from earlier forms in making the evil power ultimately subordinate to God.

In the course of time the Bogomils developed a mythology of their own, and by the 12th century a number of Bogomil books were in circulation. The texts of some of them have survived to this day. Typical of their beliefs about Satanael is the legend that after he had fallen from grace he climbed back as far as the fifth heaven asking the angels as he went how much they owed God, and promising to reduce their debts. Through these promises, Satanael won over a third of God's angels, whom he carried on his seven tails.

Another legend, dating from at least as early as the 11th century, made the Devil the creator of Adam's body and God the creator of his soul. The Devil stole the soul from God, but could not make it stay in Adam's body. He then wandered off for 300 years, and during this time lived off the meat of unclean animals. He returned at the end of this period and forced the soul to stay in Adam's body by stopping up the anus, through which it had escaped before, with his hand. This myth explained, according to the Bogomils, why when a man is angry 'he rages like a snake, a dog or a cat: his soul partakes of all these animals.'

The Cross of Satan

The Bogomils rejected the Old Testament in general, and in particular the Law of Moses and the books of the Prophets, as the revelation of the evil power. They had their own canon of New Testament books, which they interpreted freely, often in an allegorical fashion. They rejected the sacrament of baptism and maintained that the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ were illusory, not actual events, involving a phantom and not a real man. It followed that they denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. They refused to venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Bogomils put forward a special reason for not revering the Holy Cross, which they said was made by Satan and, since Jesus was crucified on it, was an object detestable to God. Kozma accuses them of cutting down crosses and making tools out of the wood.

The Bogomils had no churches – they regarded them as material objects, and therefore as objects of loathing – and no set forms of worship, apart from the Lord's Prayer, which they recited at regular intervals throughout the day and night. They condemned the Church hierarchy and had no priesthood, although there is some evidence that at a later period at least, the title of *dedets*, 'grandfather', was used to indicate a rank corresponding to that of bishop in the Orthodox Church.

In the 11th century Bogomilism spread to Asia Minor, and the sect had adherents in Constantinople itself, even among the ranks of the aristocracy. The Byzantine Bogomils developed an extremely peculiar doctrine of the Trinity, and taught that Christ entered the Virgin Mary's body through her right ear, and issued forth again as a phantom. This belief was connected with the view that the Divine Logos (the Word which became incarnate as Jesus, according to Orthodox dogma) was not eternal, but the spoken word of God uttered in historical time by Christ in his teaching – hence the entry through the ear. The Byzantine Bogomils also elaborated the sect's demonology, believing that each man was inhabited by a demon, and that the demons particularly loved water, the realm of Satanael.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

The Bogomils' moral and social teaching was the logical outcome of their belief that matter is evil. Sexual union, even lawful marriage, they particularly abhorred, as it led to the reproduction of matter; and they were accused by their enemies of shrinking from children as if from a bad smell. Husbands and wives who were converted to Bogomilism were required to live apart for a long time before the final renunciation of their marriage vows and initiation into the sect. In spite of this, the Bogomils became very numerous after the 10th century, and for this reason it has been supposed that some of them, the 'ordinary' believers were allowed to have children.

The Bogomils refused to eat meat, which was especially abominable in their view, as the product of the procreative act, and they would not drink wine, as they believed that the tree planted in the Garden of Eden by the Devil was the vine.

Throughout the source literature for the history of the Bogomils – all of which was written by their enemies – they are accused of deceit and hypocrisy, and in particular of adopting an outwardly 'lamb-like', gentle, modest and quiet demeanour which concealed a ravening wolf within.

Bogomilism disappeared from history when Bulgaria was conquered by the Turks at the end of the 14th century, but the movement had begun to decline from the beginning of the century. It was at this time that they were first accused of sexual immorality and of practising magic and reviving certain pagan rites and superstitions. The name Bogomil seems to have been adopted by and applied to almost anyone with outlandish and unorthodox beliefs, and the Bogomilism which was obliterated by the Ottoman Turks was only loosely related to the original doctrine.

DAVID PHILLIPS

FURTHER READING: The fullest account in English is *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* by D. Obolensky (Oxford Univ. Press, 1948); see also *The Bogomils* by Oto Bihalji-Merin and Alojz Benac (Thames & Hudson, London 1962).

Bones

Longest-lasting part of the body, and so in some societies seen as the root of life; shamans sometimes experience mystical 'death' in which the flesh is stripped from their bones, which are washed and dried before the body is reconstituted in a 'rebirth': Pacific islanders use a pointing bone as a magic wand: in American folk medicine carrying a bone cures backache, toothache, cramp and fits: bones have many magical uses, and people still break a fowl's 'wishbone' for luck.

C. M. Dixon

BOOK OF THE DEAD

Passport to Eternal Bliss

The Egyptians were much concerned with life after death, as shown in many inscriptions and texts found in pyramids and coffins. The Book of the Dead outlined the difficulties awaiting them and provided them with practical information

IT BECAME THE CUSTOM in ancient Egypt from about the 18th Dynasty (1580–1320 BC) to place in the tombs of the dead papyrus scrolls inscribed with texts. These texts were designed to help the dead to rise to life again and obtain a happy lot in the next world. The name Book of the Dead is a modern one, given by Egyptologists. The ancient Egyptian title was 'Chapters for Coming Forth by Day'. This title described what the texts would do for the dead, according to Egyptian belief. Briefly, it meant 'ability to leave the tomb' and it involved many strange and complex ideas about human nature and destiny. The Book of the Dead was the product of a long development of faith and ritual practice concerning death and the dead in Egypt. Many of the texts can be traced back through two earlier collections of funerary texts, the Pyramid Texts and the Coffin Texts.

The Pyramid Texts have a unique place in human records; for they are not only the earliest records we have of Egyptian thought, but they are also the earliest body of religious writings we have of mankind as a whole. They are called 'Pyramid Texts' because they are inscribed, in hieroglyphic characters, on the interior walls of certain pyramids at Sakkara, the necropolis or burial place of the ancient city of Memphis. The Pyramid Texts date from about 2350 to 2175 BC but it is clear that they contain traditional material which goes back to a much earlier period.

The inscriptions were collected and arranged by the priests of Heliopolis, near Cairo, which was the ancient cult-centre of Atum-Re, the sun god. In composing these texts, the Heliopolitan priests seem to have had a double purpose. The first was to provide the dead kings, buried in the pyramids concerned, with the magical means of securing resurrection from death and ascent to the sky, where they might join the sun god on his unending journey through the sky by day and the underworld by night. The sun god was imagined to make this journey by boat, and in the Egyptian mind eternal bliss was thus conceived as being for ever in the company of Atum-Re as he made his unceasing circuit of the universe.

This linking of the kings' posthumous destiny with Atum-Re was evidently part of the policy of the Heliopolitan priests, intended to exalt the status of the god they served. The policy finds further expression in the texts by the presentation of Atum-Re as the creator of the universe, and Heliopolis as the place where he began his work of creation.

Guide to the Afterlife

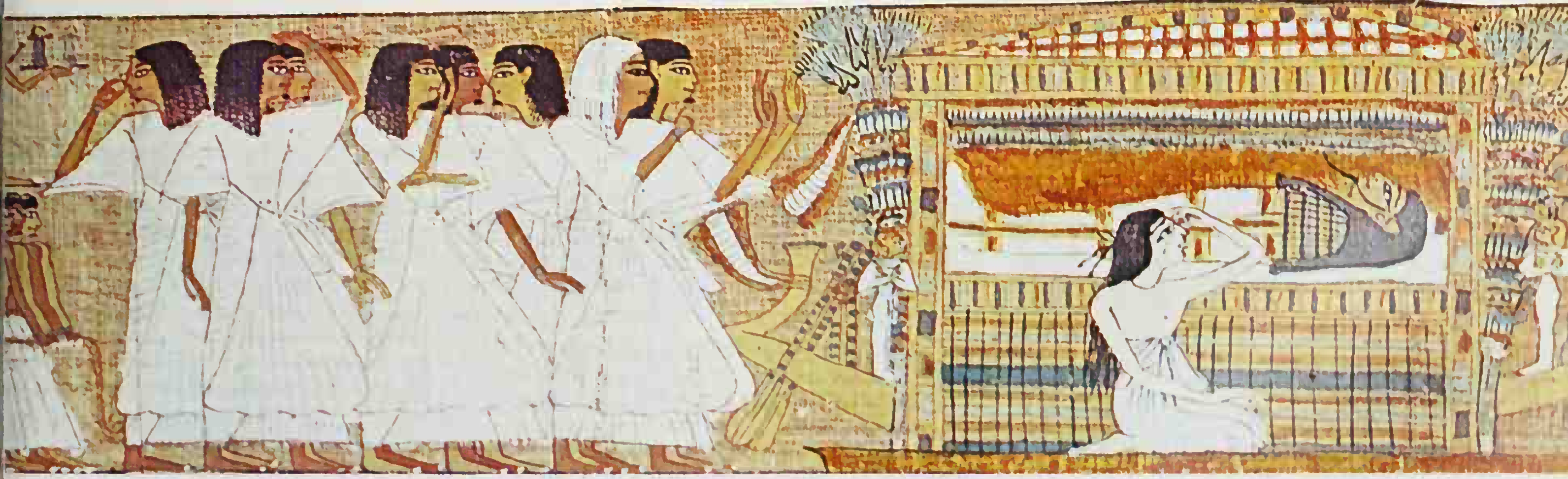
The Heliopolitan priests were not skilful at literary composition, and the Pyramid Texts include rituals for use in embalming and funeral rites, hymns, incantations, magical spells, prayers and myths in no apparent order. It appears that any material deemed to have a religious or magical efficacy was included. Some of it was evidently of a very primitive character: for example, the so-called Cannibal Hymn, which represents the dead king as eating the gods, doubtless reflects a practice of ritual cannibalism that had once, long before, existed in Egypt.

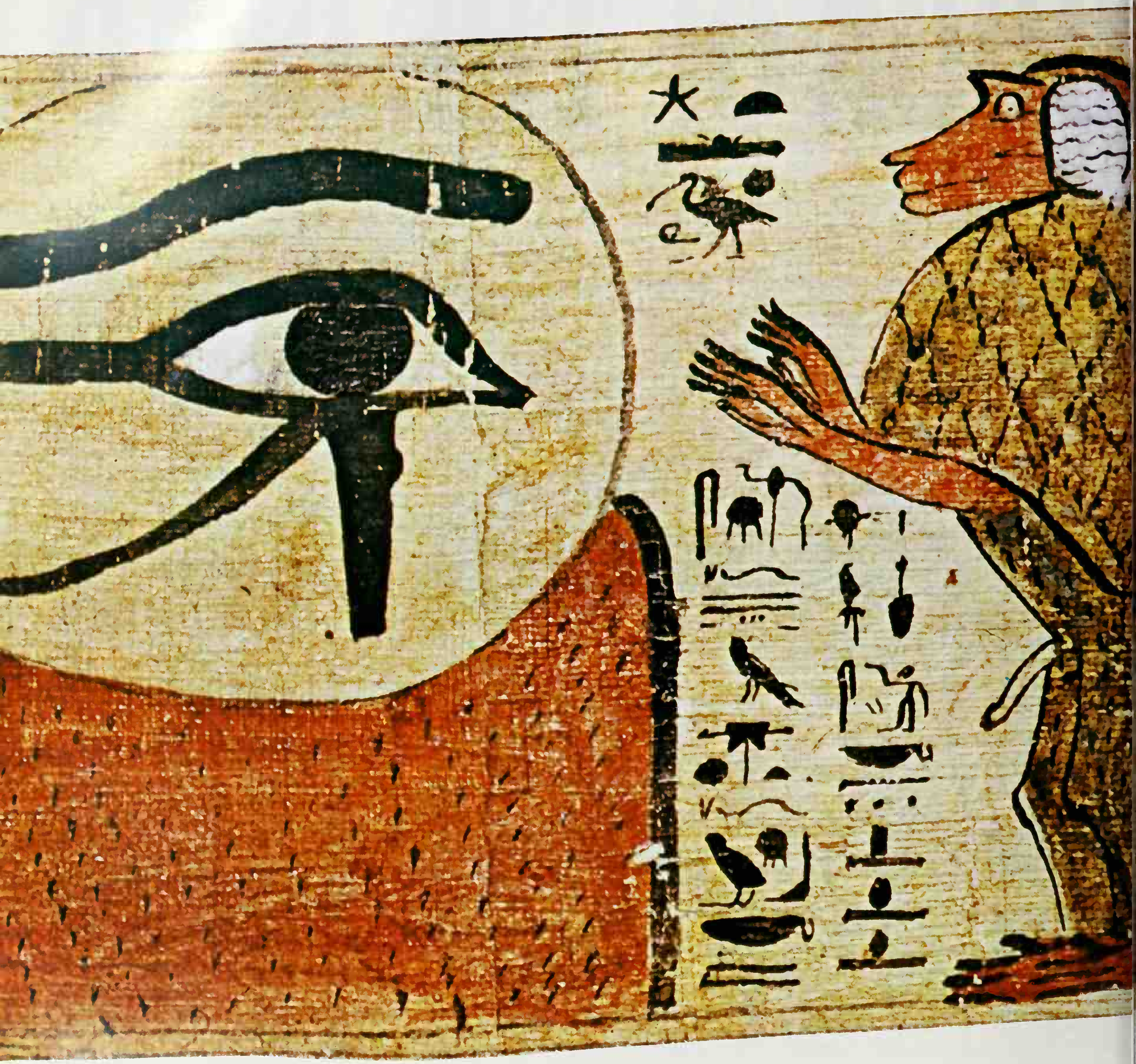
The priests of Heliopolis sought to associate the pharaoh's eternal future with their own god Atum-Re; but they could not ignore a more ancient mortuary god named Osiris. The Egyptians believed that Osiris, a good king of long ago, had risen from the dead after being foully murdered. They further believed that a dead person, who was ritually identified with Osiris, could also be raised to life again. (See OSIRIS.)

Originally, it would seem, this Osirian mortuary ritual was confined to royal use, and it was evidently so well established that the Heliopolitan priests felt obliged to incorporate it into their Pyramid Texts. Doubtless they could not safely ignore such ancient rites, which had long been practised to secure resurrection for the kings of

Probably the finest existing copy of the Book of the Dead is the papyrus made for Ani, a royal scribe who lived in Thebes in about 1320 BC. In this illustration, of his funeral procession, mourners are shown following the boat-shaped hearse on which his mummified body is lying: British Museum

Michael Holford





Egypt. But the Osirian idea of salvation from death logically contradicted the Heliopolitan view of a blessed afterlife with the sun god.

These two different views of the afterlife add to the confusion of ideas and imagery in the Pyramid Texts. Thus, while some texts are designed to enable the dead king to fly up to heaven as a falcon or climb up on a ladder, others deal with his embalming and resurrection according to the legend of Osiris. This discrepancy remained a permanent feature of Egyptian belief about the state of the dead as can be seen from the texts of the Book of the Dead.

The following translated extracts give some idea of the diction and imagery of the Pyramid Texts. First, an incantation designed to enable the dead king to join the sun god Re:

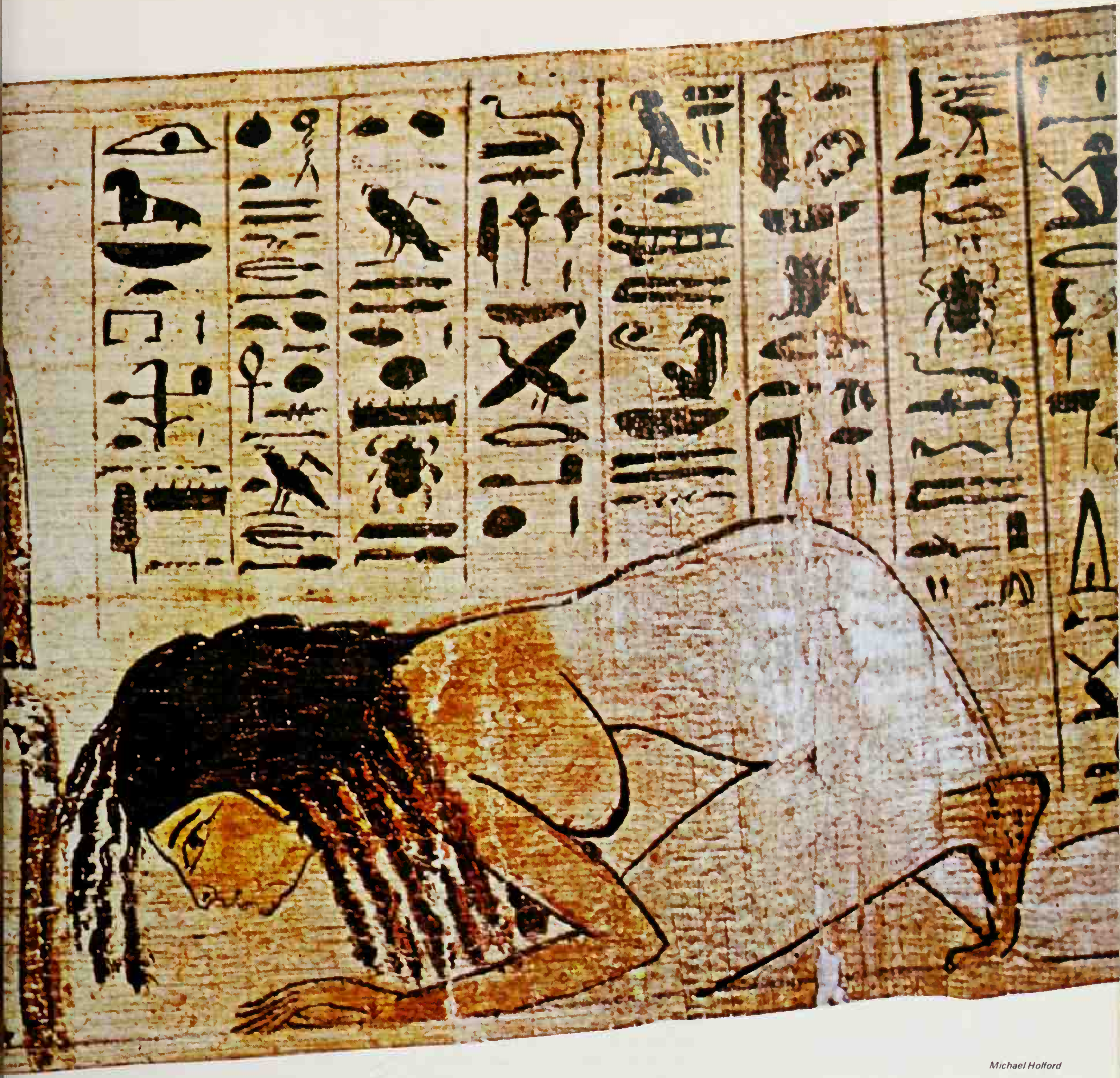
> He flieth as a bird, and he settleth as a beetle on an empty seat that is in the ship of Re. . . He roweth in the sky in thy ship, O Re, and he cometh to land in thy ship, O Re.

The next illustrates the way in which the dead Pharaoh Unas is ritually identified with Osiris, so that, invoking the principle of imitative magic, he is one with Osiris in his resurrected life:

> Thy (Osiris's) body is the body of Unas. Thy bones are the bones of this Unas. (If) thou walkest, this Unas walks; (if) this Unas walks, thou walkest.

During the period from c 2160 to 1580 BC, the nobility of Egypt adopted the custom of burying their dead in large wooden coffins, on the sides of which were painted texts designed to help the dead to pass safely to a blessed afterlife. The Coffin Texts are particularly characterized by the concern expressed by the deceased that he should have an adequate supply of food and drink, lest he should be forced to feed on his own excrement. He also asks that he should be assured of a supply of fresh air to breathe and that the integrity of his body should be preserved. Belief in the potency of magic is also abundantly attested.

The scales or balances, which were to be used in the dread judgement that faced the dead, are mentioned. The following passage, which takes the form of an invocation of the



Michael Holford

The Book of the Dead contained spells, incantations and descriptions of rituals that would help those who had died to pass unscathed through the dangers of the underworld, and achieve a happy afterlife. Some of the rituals were meant to assist the dead man to join the sun god in the sky. In this illustration from a text of the 21st Dynasty (c1000 BC), the sun disc, containing the eye of Re the sun god, is worshipped by an ape and a priestess: Papyrus of Hert-Tavi, British Museum

un god, gives some idea of the terror this rim ordeal inspired. The balance is personified as an awful demonic being.

> Thou canst protect me from this god of mysterious form, whose two eyebrows are the two arms of the balance, who casts his lasso over the wicked (to hale them to) his block, who annihilates the souls, in the day when evil is assessed, in the presence of the Master of all! Who is this god, whose two eyebrows are the two arms of the balance? It is Horus who presides at Letopolis. Others say: ~~it~~ is Thoth, it is Nefertem, the son of Sekhmet, this one who raises his arm.

his invocation is reproduced in Chapter 17 f the later Book of the Dead.

On some coffins, found in the necropolis of El-Bersheh and dating from the end of the 11th Dynasty (c 2000 BC), a funerary text occurs which differs strikingly from the Coffin Texts. The text is also notable for the illustration that accompanies it, and which makes it a veritable guidebook to the next world. It shows a map of the journey which the dead had to make by either of two tortuous roads that were separated by a lake of fire. One was a land route, leading to the country of Ro-Setau, a mysterious place connected with the realm of Osiris; its entrance was guarded by a gate of fire. The other route was by water to the lake of Ro-Setau, the entrance to which was watched over by a ram-headed crocodile, armed with a knife. Other dangers also beset the dead on the way – serpents, monsters, gates that could not be opened except by the right magical spells. This funerary text has, appropriately, been named the Book of the Two Ways.

The Pyramid Texts were compiled by the priests of Heliopolis for the exclusive use of

The Weighing of the Heart

One of the most famous scenes in the Papyrus of Ani shows the weighing of the heart after death in the Hall of the Two Truths. The heart of the royal scribe Ani is weighed in a balance against a feather, the symbol of truth. A dog-headed ape, associated with the god Thoth, sits on the beam of the balance, and Thoth himself stands at one side to record the result of the trial. The jackal-headed god Anubis tests the tongue of the balance. Behind Thoth stands the monster Amemet, 'the devourer of the dead'.

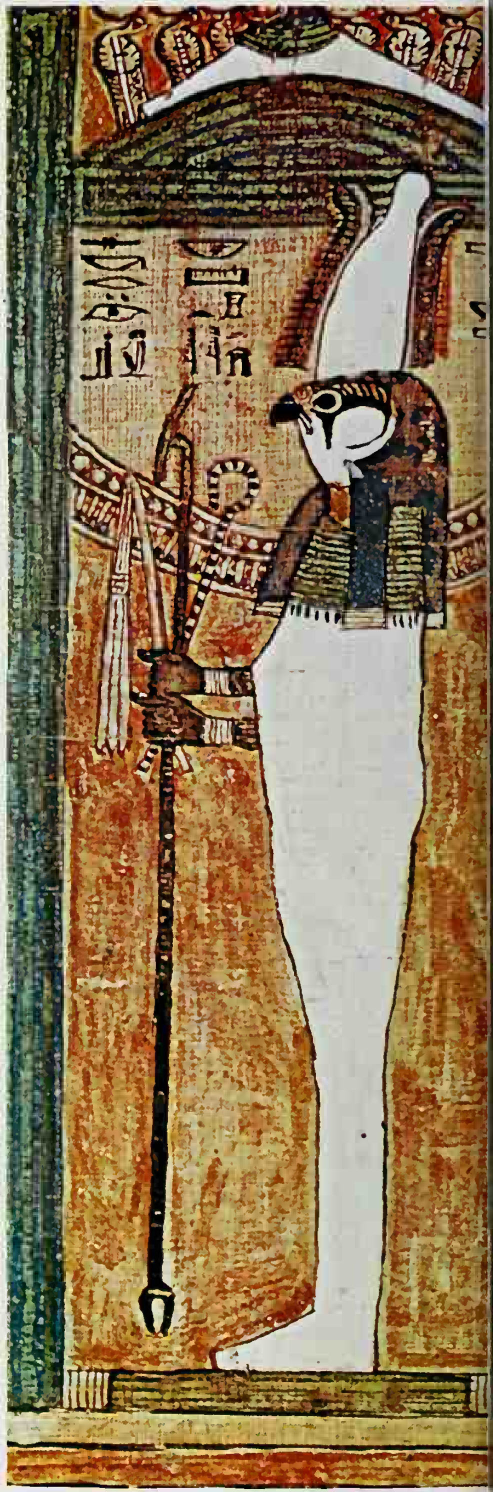
The text reads:

Osiris, the scribe Ani, says: 'My heart my mother, my heart my mother, my heart my coming into being! May there be nothing to resist me at my judgement; may there be no opposition to me from the Tchatcha (the gods of the four cardinal points); may there be no parting of you from me in the presence of him who keeps the scales. You are my ghost *(ka)* within my body which knits and strengthens my limbs. May you come forth to the place of happiness to which I am advancing. May the Shenit (divine beings) not cause my name to stink, and may no lies be spoken against me in the presence of the god. Good is it for you to hear.'

Thoth, the righteous judge of the great company of the gods who are in the presence of Osiris, says: 'Hear this judgement. The heart of Osiris has in truth been weighed and his soul has stood as a witness for him; it has been found true by trial in the Great Balance. No wickedness has been found in him; he has not wasted the offerings in the temples; he has not done harm by his deeds; and he uttered no evil reports . . . on earth.'

The great company of the gods reply to Thoth dwelling in Khemennu: 'That which comes forth from your mouth has been ordained. Osiris, the scribe Ani, triumphant, is holy and righteous. He has not sinned, nor has he done evil against us. Let it not be given to the devourer Amemet to prevail over him. Meat-offerings and entrance into the presence of the god Osiris shall be granted to him, together with a dwelling for ever in Sekhet-hetepu, as to the followers of Horus.'

Adapted from E. A. W. Budge,
The Egyptian Book of the Dead



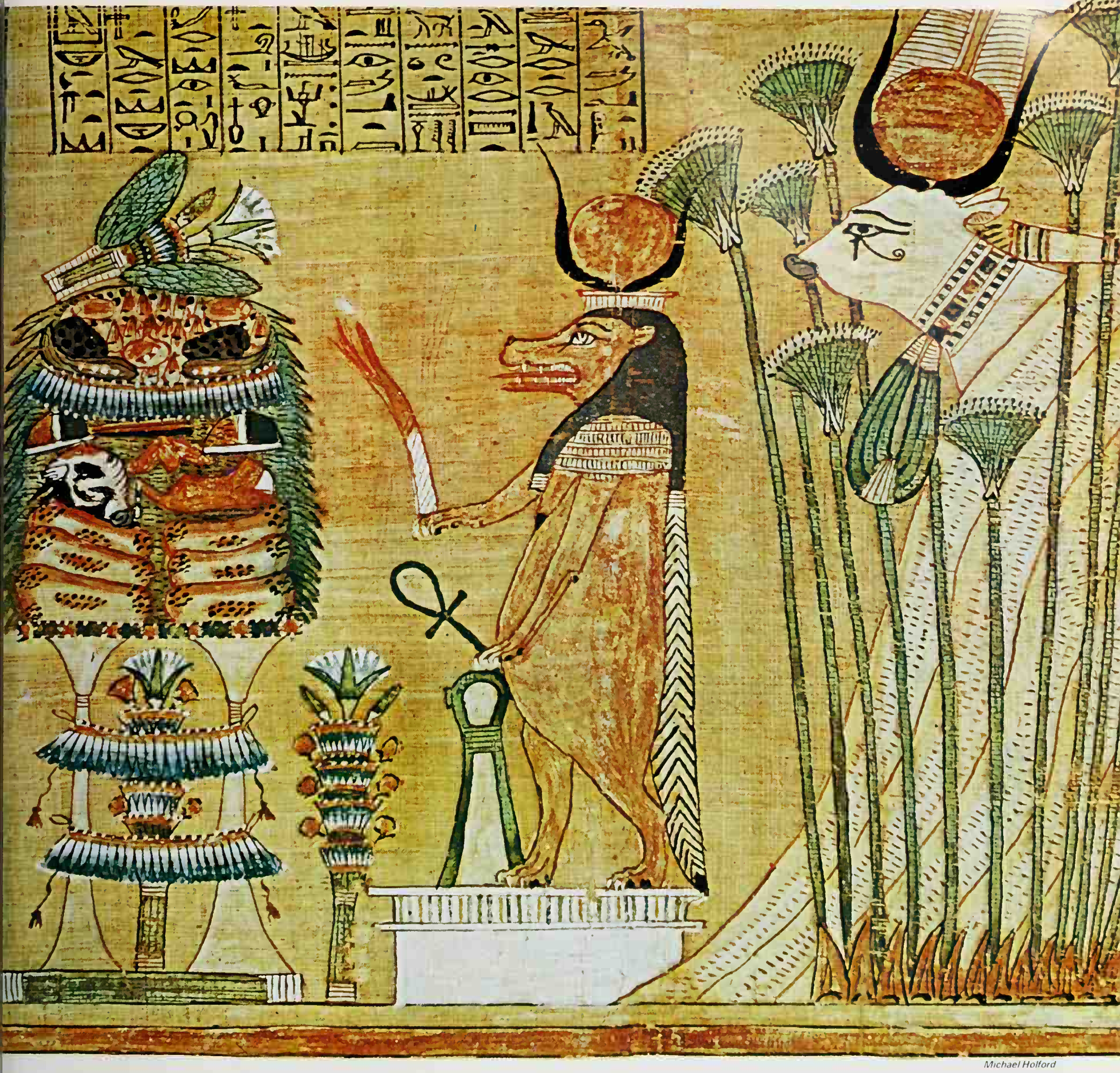
Egyptian religious beliefs and practices are vividly reflected in illustrations to the Papyrus of Ani. *Right* Seker or Socharis, the hawk-headed god of the underworld, early identified with Osiris *Facing page, from left to right* A table piled with offerings of food; Hathor, the sky goddess and the protective goddess of the Theban city of the dead, as a hippopotamus and as a cow, her sacred animal

the dead pharaohs; no reference is made in them to the fate of other folk. The Coffin Texts reveal that later on nobles and other important persons had begun to take over this ancient royal ritual. In so doing, they did not change the royal references and terminology of the ancient texts, doubtless because they feared that any alteration in the traditional form might impair the magical efficacy of the spells and incantations. The resulting confusion, which also occurs in the later Book of the Dead, is very puzzling to the modern reader but it seems to have been no obstacle to Egyptian faith.

The process of democratization continued into the period from 1580 to 1090 BC, and it finds its complete expression in the Book of the Dead. By this time, any person who could afford the essential minimum of what was once the royal mortuary ritual could hope to enjoy the resurrection to a new life which had once been the privilege of the pharaoh. To enable the dead to achieve this resurrection, and to pass safely through all the grisly perils of the underworld to everlasting happiness, assistance had to be provided as it had been for the pharaohs in the Pyramid Texts and later for the nobles in the Coffin Texts.

Selections of appropriate texts were provided by scribes, written on sheets of papyrus, which were rolled up and deposited in the tomb. The selection and presentation of the texts, which thus formed the Book of the Dead, varied according to the means of the deceased or the generosity of his heirs. Cheap copies were available for the poorer members of society, which contained only what were regarded as the really indispensable texts. Spaces would be left in them for the insertion of the names of those by whom, or for whom, they were eventually purchased. The more elaborate versions, which were produced for the wealthy, contained varying numbers of chapters.

The larger and obviously more expensive versions of the Book of the Dead were generally illustrated by scenes of the funerary ritual and of the experiences of the deceased in the next world. What is probably the finest copy of the Book of the Dead is the Papyrus of Ani, now one of the great treasures of the British Museum. It



Michael Holford

was made for the royal scribe Ani, who held various important offices in Thebes about 1320 BC. The scroll measures 78 feet by 1 foot 3 inches, and is the longest known papyrus of its period. The text is written in hieroglyphic characters, and the illustrations are done in various colours and are well and clearly drawn.

The most impressive illustration in the Papyrus of Ani shows the judgement of the dead Ani in the Hall of the Two Truths. The scene depicts the heart of Ani being weighed against the feather-symbol of Maat (Truth). The next scene shows Ani, after the dread ordeal from which he has emerged justified or 'true of voice', being presented by the god Horus to Osiris.

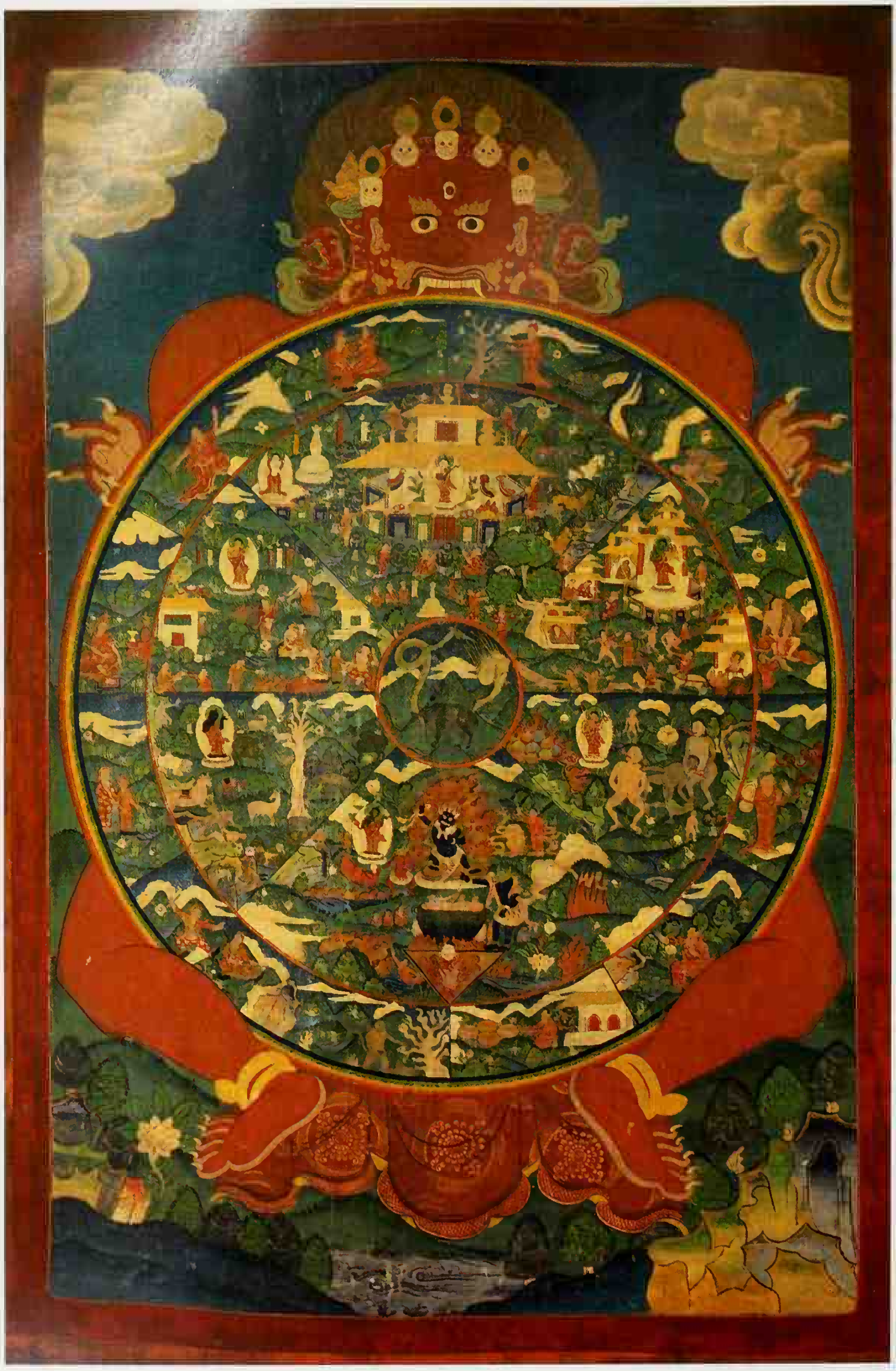
This judgement scene usually illustrates chapter 30 of the Book of the Dead which took the form of a prayer addressed by the dead person to his heart not to testify against him at the awful moment when it was balanced against the symbol of Truth (see also JUDGEMENT).

Other scenes in the Papyrus of Ani show the funeral procession and the ceremony of 'Opening the Mouth', a magical rite designed to restore to the embalmed body certain of its faculties (see EGYPT). The resurrection of Ani is also represented, and Ani and his wife are depicted in many scenes enjoying their new life in the paradise of Osiris. In one delightful scene Ani appears to be playing a game like chess, advised by his wife who sits behind him.

The production of copies of the Book of the Dead continued down the long centuries of Egyptian history into the 1st century BC. This lengthy tradition bears witness to the enduring strength of the Egyptian belief that the ancient Osirian mortuary ritual effectively provided the means of defeating the dread consequences of death and attaining a state of eternal bliss.

S. G. F. BRANDON

FURTHER READING: E. A. W. Budge, *The Book of the Dead* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950); S. A. B. Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts* (Longmans, Toronto, 1952, 4 vols); see also T. C. Allen, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (Chicago Univ. Press, 1960) and S. G. F. Brandon, *The Judgement of the Dead* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967).



Bridgeman Art Library

The wheel of life, turned by the fearsome Lord of the Dead; 19th century Tibetan *thangka*

BOOK OF THE DEAD

Tibetan

THE BARDO THODOL, as it is known in Tibetan, is a description of what happens after death. It represents only a small part of the Tibetan material on dying, and could better be called 'a' Tibetan book of the dead than 'the' one. The classic version in English was translated by a Tibetan lama, Kazi Dawa-Samdup, and edited by W. Y. Evans-Wentz, who was an enthusiastic Theosophist and admirer of Madame Blavatsky, and studied with Buddhist lamas in Tibet. The ideas and the complex symbolism involved are unfamiliar to most Westerners and, inevitably, neither of the two available modern versions is easy for the uninstructed to grasp.

The text treats death, not as the end but as a recurrent stage in the cycle of lives, deaths and rebirths which in Buddhist belief we all experience many times over, and from which only the enlightened can escape into Nirvana (see BUDDHISM; NIRVANA). Traditionally in Tibet the text was recited at a person's deathbed by a lama. It describes the extraordinary and frightening experiences which occur in the 49 days (the number is explained as symbolic rather than literal) in the interval between dying and being reborn. Its purpose is to teach the art of rightly dying and to banish fear of death and unwillingness to die, which produce 'unfavourable results'.

At the outset the dying person is told that the moment has come to leave the earthly plane and experience the Clear Light of the Void. Those who are exceptionally spiritually advanced will attain liberation; the great majority will be outside the body, but aware of the deathbed scene, hearing the weeping of friends and relatives, and wondering uneasily whether death has come or not. It will be some time before the truth dawns: now there follow awesome sounds and lights, but it is essential to understand that these are illusions, projections of the deceased's own consciousness.

Presently there are coloured lights and various deities appear. The blinding white light of wisdom will dazzle the dead person, who will shrink away, but must cleave to it rather than to the duller, smoky light which beckons the unwary to the hell-realms of misery. There are numerous visions of deities, terrifying sounds of thunder and voices crying 'Kill! Kill!', but these again are illusions.

The Wrathful Deities

Further testing comes with the appearance of Wrathful Deities – flame-wrapped beings with many heads, arms and legs, who brandish weapons in their numerous hands and drink blood from skulls: '...from the east, the Dark Brown Lion-Headed One, the hands crossed on the breast, and in the mouth holding a corpse, and shaking the mane; from the south, the Red Tiger-Headed One, the hands crossed downwards, grinning and showing the fangs and looking on with protruding eyes; from the west, the Black Fox-Headed One, the right hand holding a shaving knife, the left holding an intestine, and she eating and licking the blood therefrom; from the north, the Dark Blue Wolf-Headed One, the two hands tearing open a corpse...'

These gruesome figures, too, can be vanquished by recognizing them for what they are and not giving way to panic. Lonely and afraid as the impulse towards rebirth gathers strength, the dead wander in a realm of illusions, confronted by thick darkness, beasts of prey, phantoms, snow and tempest, earthquakes, hallucinations of being pursued by a raging mob and hiding in crevices in rocks. In a judgment before the Lord of the Dead, each person's good deeds and bad deeds are counted out in the form of white and black pebbles, and the deceased is agonisingly torn to pieces over and over again. But all this is still illusion.

C.G. Jung regarded the nightmare figures of the Tibetan text as images from the collective unconscious. The Buddhist tradition teaches that recognizing them for what they truly are is the path to enlightenment. (See also TIBET).

FURTHER READING: *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, ed W.Y.Evans-Wentz (Oxford University Press, New York, 1960); *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, trans F. Fremantle and Chogyam Trungpa (Shambhala, Boston, 1975).

Borneans read sermons in stones, wisdom in the winds and auguries from wild animals. They trace their origins to mythological marriages between gods and birds, and believe every part of the natural world has meaning for them

BORNEO

BORNEO, FAMOUS FOR its headhunters, is the third largest island in the world and has a population of around five million. Although headhunting has now died out, the practice is still deeply relevant to the religion and mythology of these people. Over half the population live inland, up the great rivers and among the rugged mountains. These lively, able and artistic people live in long-houses, each a self-contained community of up to 500 under a single palm-thatched roof. All are, or have been until recently, pagan animists (see ANIMISM) but they are divided into some 20 linguistic and cultural groups with many variations on a common theme of belief.

Almost nowhere in the world is animism so developed, elaborated and intellectualized as among the Iban people of Sarawak and the related tribes of Borneo. This faith places man in a universe which he feels he shares intimately with everything else: with the moon and the moths, the birds and the bees, trees, stones, snakes, scorpions, winds and thunderstorms, other men's wives, his own dreams, desires, experiences, – or a hen's egg. A system of thought which can hear a rock sing and make a songbird speak as a god, decide your day by a nightmare or your destiny by an eagle's flight, can only be understood against the background of everyday life in equatorial Borneo. For myth, ritual and beliefs about death and the afterlife are closely related to everyday problems: the problems of contesting yet accepting, conquering yet conserving the rich, tropical rain forest which still covers three-quarters of the great island and would quickly overgrow the rest again, if not kept under firm control.

Cricket on the Hearth

In this setting, people have to work hard under difficult conditions. Easy living in tropical plenty does not occur in inland Borneo, with its erratic climate, everlasting humid heat, generally poor sandstone soils and tough terrain. Mt Kinabalu, at 13,500 ft the highest peak in South-East Asia, is regarded as a sacred place of the spirits by all who live within sight of those fierce black cliffs. People here learn from birth to recognize that they are only a small part of a hard but rewarding jungle world, where to flourish they must know the ways of serpent, snail and deer; wild fruit and the fish below the rapids; how to tell tasty from lethal mushrooms, and how to deal with locusts and grubs.

So, in unusually humane modesty, it is believed that a fly or a flycatcher can be the equal of a great Iban chief. And everyone must always be ready to listen to what other creatures or objects show, say, sing, signal, warn or otherwise suggest. For instance, the dog-like 'whoof' of the barking deer is considered informative in Borneo. Great importance is attached to the sounds made by species of cricket and grasshopper – so much so that Selampandai, the 'creator of man', is in one manifestation a nocturnal house-cricket.

Today if you hear such a selampandai cricket in the long-house at night, the sound it makes – a faint but metallic ting-ting like the jingling of coins – is regarded as a direct message from the god to living folk in the long-house. There are usually two alternative messages based on the position or other context of the sound or sight. In this case, however, the cricket's message is specifically for pregnant women. If the selampandai is heard on or from the verandah the child will be a boy, for that is where the men sit. On the other hand the woman will give birth to a girl if the cricket is heard in the room.

Another sort of cricket, called mengalai in life (and Mangalai as a particular personality) is spokesman of the dead. This cricket rarely enters the long-house – and if he does it is a serious portent. He often lives in

Even today the Ibans of Borneo trace their ancestry back to the offspring of the gods, and there are many who believe that they are descended from the son who was born to a bird princess, daughter of the great eagle god Sengalong Burong, as the result of an adulterous affair with a human being: wooden images of Iban gods

The Slide Centre

the support poles under the house, at ground level, wherever it is damp and slushy. He speaks especially to the relatives of somebody who has died recently. Commonly he asks for food offerings and other attention on behalf of the departed. Failure to obey may cause severe illness.

A subtle distinction is drawn between animals, birds and insects, and plant life. Although trees and plants lack the power of movement, they can be charged with all sorts of special and often spiritual qualities. The essence of the matter, which is animism in the fullest sense, is that man seeks communication with the total tropical environment. But he not only seeks communication with the visible tangible world but with everything that can be heard, dreamed, imagined or felt.

This attitude of ear and mind does not distinguish human noises from other sorts of sound, nor does it distinguish sickness from death or ancient warrior chiefs from modern political leaders. It is essential to emphasize this. Everybody and everything has some sort of say in the Bornean way of life. The everyday medium for routine communication between self and the unseen is through the language of animals, who are all around the long-house and inhabit the jungle. But everything has something to communicate, not only to humans but to the gods and spirits as well.

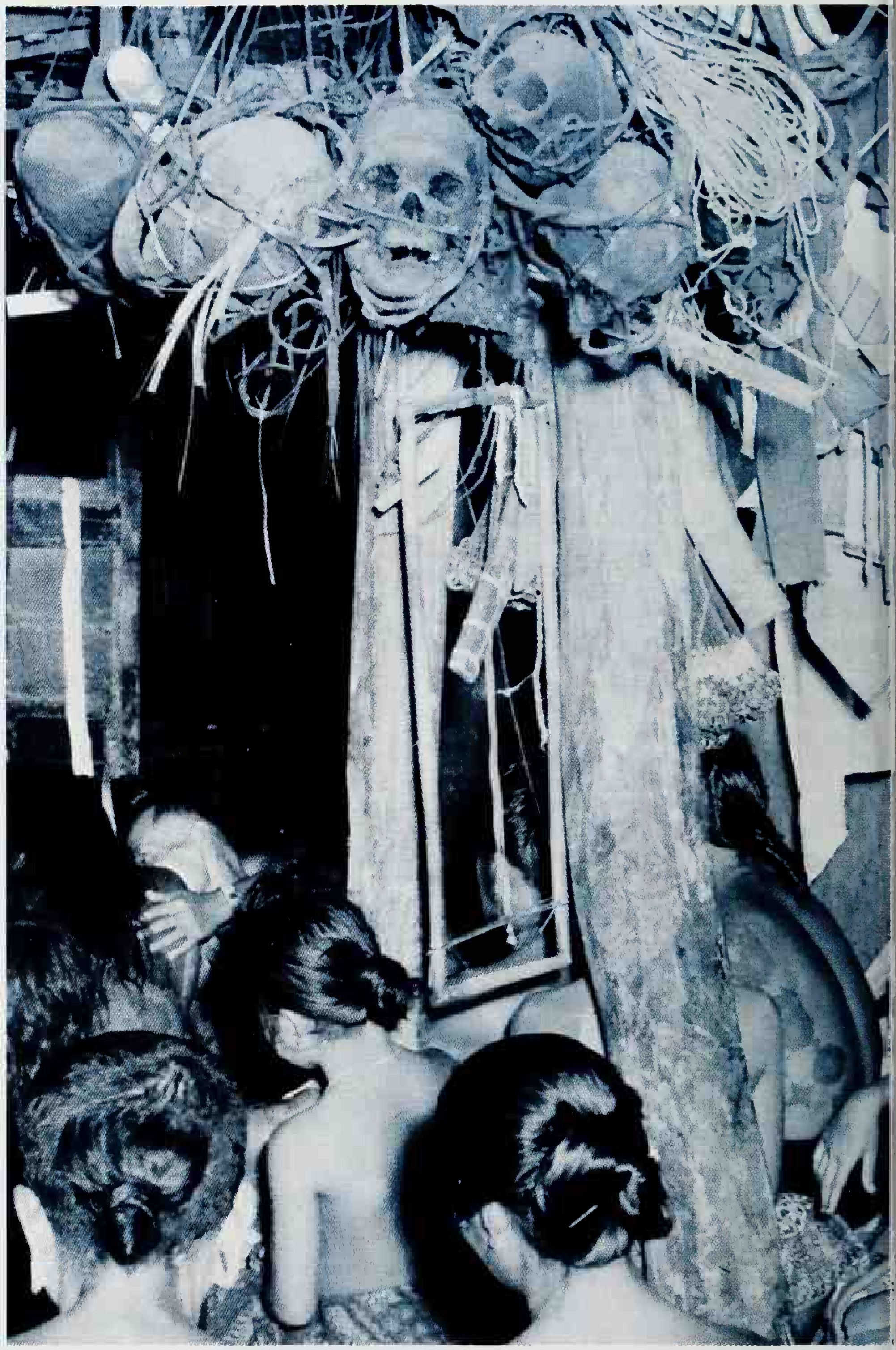
Two Heads Are Better

Animist thinking of this kind is related to the difficulties and uncertainties of Bornean life, which were accentuated until recently by the constant fear of headhunting. The taking of human heads developed as a way in which one long-house group could acquire fresh power from another through the heads, thus strengthening its health and morale, and improving its harvest (see HEAD).

More individually, the family of a dead chief might seek a head to fortify the departed in his journey to the other life – though sometimes a slave would be sacrificed to accompany him on the long spiritual journey instead. Or young men would go headhunting to demonstrate their manly virtues to the opposite sex.

Again, dramatically, a male in some way shamed or humiliated could respond, to reinstate himself socially, by setting out on a one-man hunt. This was an alternative form of 'running amok' and could amount to suicide. Success, a triumphant dancing return with a dripping skull, would silence his critics forever. But to succeed single-handed was extremely hard, since the the conventions of whole island were established to make head-getting as difficult as possible.

The normal method was for a large war party to stalk through the mountains, preparing a secret escape route against pursuit, and then ambush a careless woman going down sleepily to the river for water at dawn, or perhaps a little boy who had strayed off to play at blowpipes. One head was as good as another for their purposes, as long as it was from a fairly remote community. Obviously neighbouring long-houses could not co-exist if they treated each other in this rough way.



A cluster of human heads hanging from the roof of a long-house in Sarawak, Borneo: in pagan times offerings were made through these heads to the gods, spirits and guardian ghosts who, the Borneans believed, inhabited the universe around them

The captured heads were kept in racks or clusters hung along the long-house verandah. Offerings were made through them, on most important religious occasions; through them because there is no idea, in this animism, of directly worshipping the heads or indeed worshipping anything. The Bornean concept is one of participation, communication, a kind of universal intercourse. There are no supreme deities to whom men and beasts need be subservient. Similarly, there are no idols, no sacred cows. The invisible can help or hinder; man decides; everything is and is not. In this respect one can see an affinity between animism and the less monkish side of Buddhism, particularly the form of Zen Buddhism as it was practised in pre-Communist China.

Dining with the Gods

This is not to say that there are no gods, no heroes, in this island pantheon. On the contrary, the universe is alive with spirits who in the past were enmeshed with (and often in bed with) man or woman; and who can return to communicate with mortal men and women, through the shaman priests or the language of the animals.

One main purpose of the great festivals, which are an exciting feature of long-house life, is to bring down these nebulous but powerful figures to earth so that they may participate with the living in eating, drinking, music, singing and dancing. These occasions, often bordering on the orgiastic, commonly go on continuously for several days and nights. They begin with the shaman invoking *all* gods, culture heroes, great warriors of yore, ancestral spirits, monsters, guardian ghosts and a multitude more to join in the fun.

The shamans may be of either sex; some of the very best are men who dress and act as women, and who in many ways are treated as such by others. These 'transvestite' shamans are supposedly better able to reach out and touch the mood of both sexes and all things. They chant all through the night, swaying on finely carved swings, and slowly bring down the 'unseen host'.

The Brahminy Kite

Bornean poetry is laden with animal metaphor as well as with specific references to the gods. The Iban pattern of godliness is one of several ways Borneans assess this side of infinity. All the persons named in thousands of verses have their place in this pattern, which begins with the vaguely benign god called Bunsu Petara, existing long ago in the nowhere. Later on there emerged a more tangible character entitled Raja Durong. His son, Raja Jembu, had seven sons and one daughter, who are of great importance in human affairs.

Even today, ordinary Ibans trace their descent from the offspring of these gods such as Selampandai, 'the maker of man', and Menjaya Manang Raja, the chief male shaman and guardian of health. The most interesting and relevant of these is the elder brother Sengalong Burong the Brahminy Kite, an eagle regarded all over Borneo as being an unusually powerful indicator of good times and bad, according to whether he circles in the sky from left to right or right to left. He is the god of courage and is especially associated with human heads.

From his marriage to a spirit Sengalong Burong produces eight children: seven daughters and one son. The son goes off to produce a human line and the daughters all marry birds, except one who falls in love with an insect, and they live in a long-house with their father as chief.

The oldest daughter, the beautiful Endu Dara Tinchin Temaga (Princess Shining Brass Ring), alone has offspring, but to achieve this result she enjoys a curious succession of affairs. Her husband, Ketupong, is a tiny woodpecker who is – in real life – an astonishingly bold little bird and therefore symbolizes to this day the qualities of bravery. He is the leader in headhunting raids. Nevertheless, like his five bird brothers-in-law he is seemingly impotent.

While the bird husband is away leading an expedition to foreign lands, his wife associates with Menggin, a human being who has, by a long series of adventures, succeeded in reaching the spirit world. In due course, she has a son by him, before her woodpecker lord returns and throws the man back down to earth. This son, Sera Gunting, later goes back to his bird motherland, commits incest and is once more expelled. But this time his grandfather, the great eagle god Sengalong Burong, teaches him new laws of marriage and of religious observance. He returns to earth not in disgrace but as a spiritual teacher.

His teaching requires that the birds of the spiritual long-house henceforth be treated by men as spokesmen for Sengalong Burong and his brother gods. Whatever the six bird husbands say by call or show in flight thus became the arbiters of Iban behaviour. Around them has grown up an intricately woven set of observances, according to whether they fly from right to left or left to right, how and where they call, in which succession they appear, and so on.

Such augury by animals is an essential part of Bornean animism. It is a living part, too. Many modern Ibans trace their descent direct from Menggin's adultery with the Brahminy Kite's eldest daughter.

Sermons from Snakes

The Kayans who live to the north of the Ibans trace their origins back to plants rather than birds. They believe that the allegedly aphrodisiac durian fruit fell and split upon the root of a great forest tree. Out came a girl, the mother of her race. But at one time long ago, the Kayans say, they did not realize that a pregnant woman would deliver a baby unaided: like the durian fruit, the female body had to split open. So they always carried out Caesarean operations – until another teacher from on high came upriver and taught a more natural method of birth.

The Kelabits, who live north again of the Kayans, beyond the headwater rapids up in the wild mountains, erect all sorts of stone structures as part of their death rites and for the journey of the spirits of the dead. These hill-folk pay particular attention to omens given by snakes. One fairly common and very poisonous snake has bare red skin at either end, head and tail, a very odd-looking creature. If this is seen going the 'wrong' way when the people are clearing the jungle for planting, the entire operation may be abandoned. Such extreme observances can be disastrous for the year's food cycle. That is why the hill-people have been easily influenced by Christian missionaries since the interior was opened up to them. Strict rules of augury do not go well with increasing population and other pressures.

Invoking the Gods

An Iban chant

The sound of the beating of dead bamboo,
Warning us to call together the older chiefs.
Ambau has already come here,
From Pangkalan Tabau,
The mooring post lashed by the trader's ropes.
Meringai also has arrived,
Husband of Randai, cleverest weaver of Batang Skrang . . .

Where are you holy Manang Sada,
Arrived from the height of Lingga mountain?
The other side is Laja's place,
He who smokes the enemy skulls.
The other side is Manang Begura's place,
He who owns a charm prolonging life,
So that no one may ever die . . .

Leave that place,
And come to a long ridge,
Lit by bright sunshine.
Bending downriver and leaning upriver,
The place where crystal water is poured . . .

Unfortunately, early missions in the area were of an extremist sort. They tended to be fundamentalist, teetotal, and preaching hellfire and brimstone. But there was a reaction against this austerity which led to the rise of several neo-Christian cults, the most successful of which was Bungan. It combined old and new ideas and laid emphasis on interpretation of dreams. But most of these cults have now died out, and Christian, and now also Islamic, missionaries are making more and more converts.

The idea of the interchangeable roles of mankind and other forms of matter is one to which we constantly return. The theory of universal interrelationships is not to be dismissed as mere superstition: much is based on acute observation and understanding. The Kelabits, for instance, fix their riceplanting calendar by a sequence of dates for migrating birds, which each year arrive with great regularity from China and Japan, starting in August. The Ibans observe the Pleiades as these move with other stars, and regulate outdoor life accordingly. The Kayans have a way of measuring the solar solstice by a carved pole which daily registers the changing shadow-length of the sun.

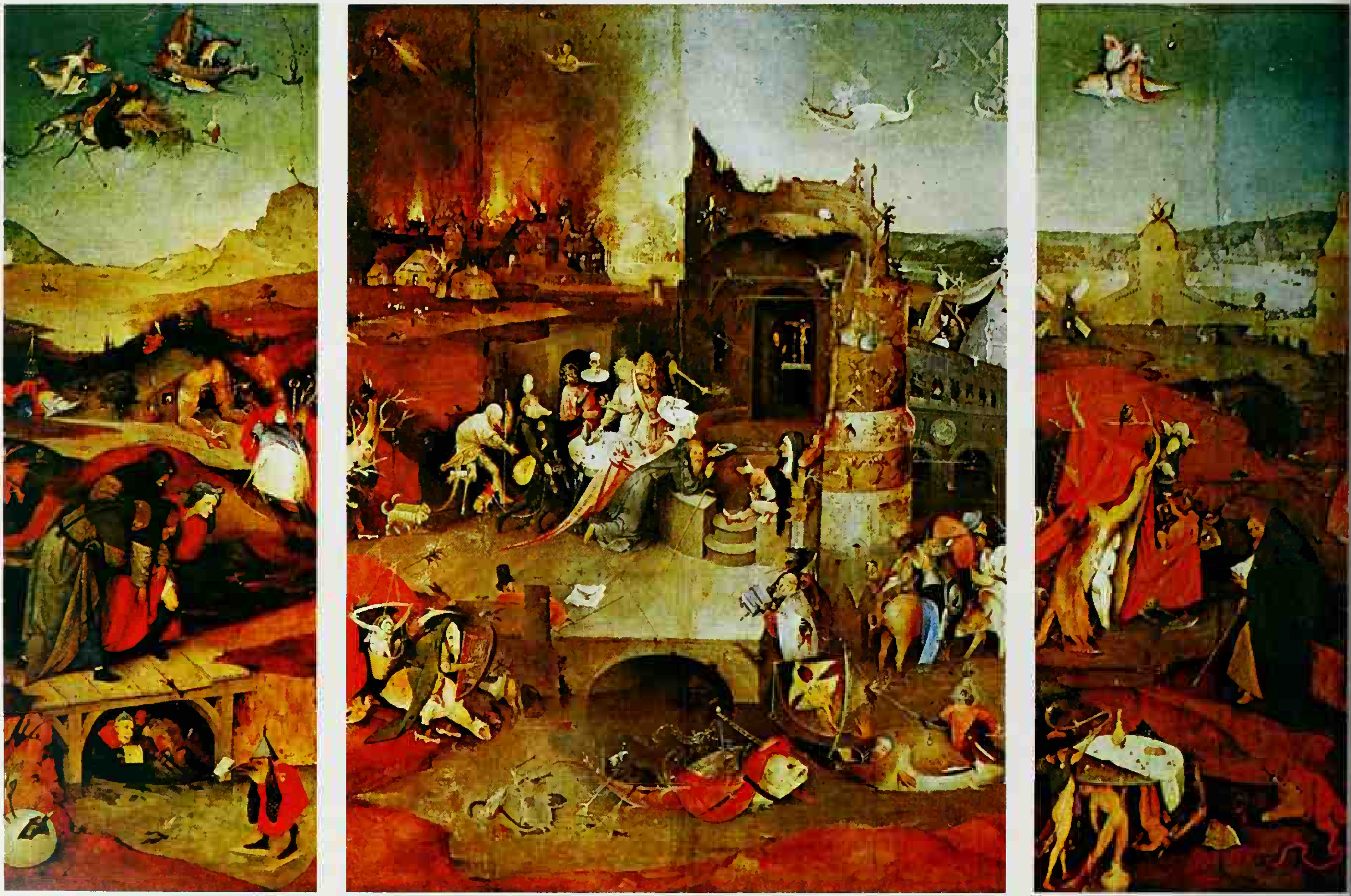
There is little room for activities like 'magic' and 'witchcraft' as separate concepts. The shaman is, to some small extent, the local physician. But anyone with the rare feel and the patience for it can learn to be a shaman and so commune with gods and spirits. Nothing he or she does is considered more than a special skill, a job of craftsmanship within the common knowledge of the group.

Through all this there is the sense of change by experiment and evolution. Thus the Iban eagle god, Sengalong Burong, is seen as the only innovator of a new system brought down to men by his illegitimate grandson. Borneo folklore, tradition, myth and faith is a lucid record of such innovations. Islam has affected and mingled with the basic island approach as Buddhist and Hindu beliefs before that, or Christian trends in this century. New fusions are occurring, but it will be surprising if they seriously alter the underlying animism.

TOM HARRISSON

FURTHER READING: W. R. Geddes, *Nine Dayak Nights* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1968); Erik Jensen, *The Iban and their Religion* (Oxford, 1974); Peter Metcalf, *Where are You, Spirits?: Style and Theme in Berawan Prayer* (Smithsonian, 1989).

HIERONYMUS BOSCH



A universe of hallucination in *The Temptation of St Anthony*, a nightmare of devilish and monstrous forms, mingling influences from medieval manuscripts and gargoyles with alchemical symbolism, sorcery and the creations of imagination run riot

Facing page Adam and Eve in Paradise, a detail from *The Garden of Terrestrial Delights*. 'It is a strange uneasy Eden with its bulbous, tropical-looking Tree of Life.' The pinks and reds are the colours of love

Hieronymus Bosch was the supreme master of the fantastic in art, the creator of a supernatural dimension that has never ceased to excite sensation and speculation. His view of man in relation to the world, the flesh and the Devil is underlined and embellished with the caperings of the monstrous, the hybrid and the deformed

VICE, SIN, FOLLY, the degeneration of the mind and body, were the themes of Hieronymus Bosch's paintings. They were in direct contrast to the placid mainstream of the Flemish School of painting in the 15th century. Not for him the typical 'Madonna and Child' of a van Eyck or a Memling; instead, Bosch reveals the inner side of man, his fears, fantasies, dreams, desires and preoccupations.

Born Hieronymus – or Jerome – van Aeken c1450, he became known as Bosch after his birthplace, 's Hertogenbosch in Holland. In *The Temptation of St Anthony* (National Museum, Lisbon), his genius rises to a tremendous crescendo; again it reaches a peak in the great triptych known from its central panel as *The Garden of Terrestrial Delights* (Prado, Madrid). These works are packed with inventions as grotesque as they are beautifully painted. They are full of symbols and allusions which, even when obscure to us now, were evidently conceived by Bosch with a theological precision.

Bosch lived in a backward region which was out of touch with modern thought. In North Brabant, lingering traces of superstitious fears and primitive terrors had survived from the Dark Ages. Bosch was probably influenced by the monstrous gargoyles of Gothic architecture, and by the fabulous creatures drawn in the margins of illuminated manuscripts and pictured in the medieval bestiaries. It is probable too that written legend and arcane or secret lore formed part of his artistic heritage. It is known that he was a member of the Brotherhood of Our Lady in his native town, a fraternity with both religious and social functions. The Brotherhood trained musicians and provided altarpieces and ornaments for the church. It also kept up the tradition, already hundreds of years old, of the community's miracle and morality plays and organized the public stage performances and pageants dear to the Netherlander's heart.

As well as representations of the Passion there would be scenes in which hermits and Christian solitaries were tempted by the Devil. Actors made up as demons and wearing grotesque masks would mime weirdly. Bosch may well have designed costumes for these spectacles. He would certainly be a spectator and no doubt he stored up impressions he might later use in painting. There is in fact an *Ecce Homo* (Staedel Institute, Frankfurt) in which Christ appears on what looks very like the open-air stage set up in the middle of the Netherlandish town.

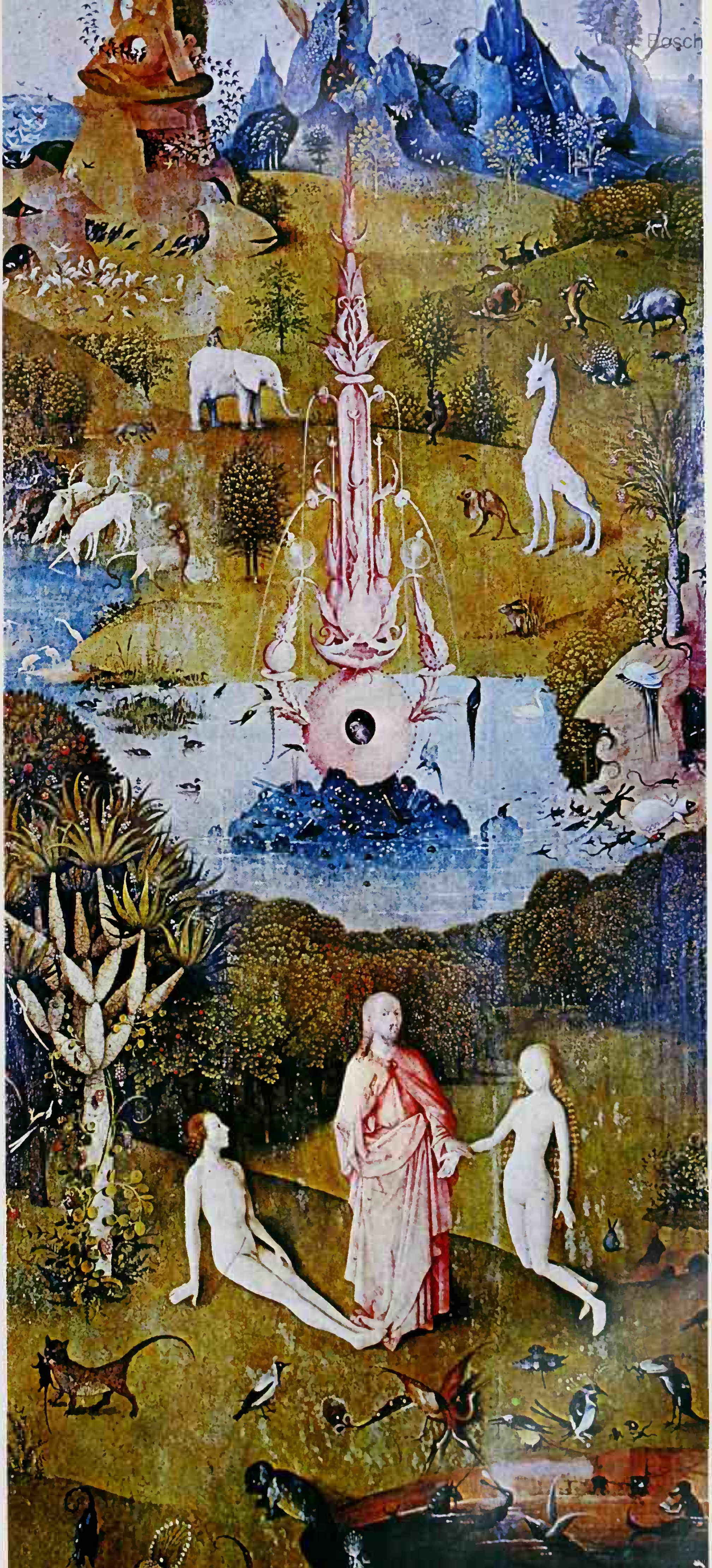
Was Bosch himself a man still in thrall to the ideas of an earlier age? The survivals of medieval thought and belief can be discerned in the mysticism and diabolism of his work, with its symbolic references to alchemy and sorcery.

In essence, Bosch's work is psychological. In an acute comment, Fray Jose Siguenza, the 16th century Spanish priest, makes this point neatly: 'The difference between the pictures of Hieronymus Bosch and those of other masters consists, in my opinion, in the fact that others mostly paint Man as he appears from without, whereas Bosch shows Man's inner nature.'

The development of this approach, suggested by the approximate chronology of his paintings, was from a simple morality to subtleties of psychological depth. Human failings are plainly satirized in the early *Seven Deadly Sins* (Prado, Madrid). Vanity is represented by a housewife in a typical Netherlandish interior, admiring herself in the mirror held up by a friend.

The Ship of Fools (Louvre) gives an equivalent in painting of a satirical poem of that title which was popular at the time. Bosch's work was now more elaborate in the use of symbols and more pointed in comment on the faults of the religious orders. A monk and nun again appear, the central characters of the shipload, drunkenly singing and playing. The picture is full of hidden meanings. The makeshift boat, perilously afloat on the dark green waters of evil, sails under a pennant bearing the Devil's emblem, the crescent. Its mast is a hazel-nut tree, symbol of the fool. The drinkers bob openmouthed at a cake dangling between them unattainably – the illusion of pleasure, perhaps. The spectator seems invited to contrast the mimicry of the professional jester, perched aloft, with the behaviour of the fools of nature.

The first of Bosch's comprehensive panoramas of evil let loose in the world and its dire consequences is the triptych *The*



Hay Wain (Prado). The left panel tells of man's first disobedience and the expulsion from Eden, while a cloud of fallen angels in loathsome insect form parachute down to beset the human race. The hay wain stands for all worldly ends, the pursuit of wealth, power, material satisfaction. All classes, princes, churchmen, the common people, join in. There is a wild scramble round the golden load, murder is done and bodies are crushed beneath the wheels. Lovers sit above, heedless of an angelic voice, more receptive to the suggestions of the winged demon beside them. Satanic goblins pull the cart along and in the final scene convoy the lost souls into the ruinous architecture of Hell. The imaginative treatment of the theme forecasts the masterpieces to come.

Sinister Shepherds

Bosch meanwhile had painted a number of subjects from the New Testament. Although these convey the message that good will prevail, there is a discomforting sense of evil present or hovering not far away. In the early *Marriage at Cana* (Boymans Museum, Rotterdam) a contrast between miracle and black magic is pointed. As the grave figure of Christ is seen turning the water into wine, a priest of the black arts lurking behind him causes the swan and boar's head borne by servitors to the feast to spit fire and poison. The splendid *Adoration of the Magi* (Prado), at first sight serenely devotional, contains many details suggestive of ill-omen, from the sinister shepherds on the stable roof to the troops of cavalry prowling in the distance. But his supreme feat was to create the universe of hallucination that so amazingly appears in the Lisbon *The Temptation of St Anthony* and the Prado *Garden of Terrestrial Delights.*

The *Temptation* follows the traditional account of the saint, steadfast in faith in the ruined temple in the desert to which he had retired to contemplate, though assailed by a horde of demons in every form, either alluring or terrifying (see ANTHONY). Bosch must have plunged deep into the contemporary treatises on alchemy, witchcraft and demonology. Alchemical symbols abound – such as the egg, symbol of the world's birth, and the gourd representing the alchemist's still, from which devils emerge.

The ritual of the Black Mass is detailed. But no literary source could account for the visual imagination and power that brings to fantastic life those flying saucers of bird-shaped boats and fish that skim through the sky, the hybrid monsters that lurk in hollow tree-trunks, the strange cross-billed bird on skates with the inverted funnel on its head that impales on its beak the artist's signature.

Omnipresent Ambiguity

Beyond question Bosch's most remarkable painting, and one of the most extraordinary paintings ever conceived, is the *Garden of Terrestrial Delights*. Volumes have been devoted to this triptych, which depicts the primal paradise, the world and hell. But ambiguity and subtlety are omnipresent. It is a strange, uneasy Eden in the left panel with its bulbous, tropical-looking Tree of Life, the elephant and giraffe and other animals of far-off lands of which he had somehow gained knowledge. The central panel is dazzling in its gaiety of colour and diversity of incident; it is the garden of worldly delight itself. The pale slender nudes thronging this dream landscape represent sexual desire and aberration in every guise. It is also a complex system of signs and symbols. The strawberries, cherries and other fruits would be understood by his contemporaries as symbols of sexual enjoyment. The prevailing pinks and reds would be recognized as the colours of love. The steely blue of the spikily fantastic and coral-surmounted structures on what has been called the 'lake of adultery' would be taken as signifying deceit. The spheres and jars in which lovers are enclosed would seem to represent the imprisoning hallucination of their desires.

Sensation Gone Astray

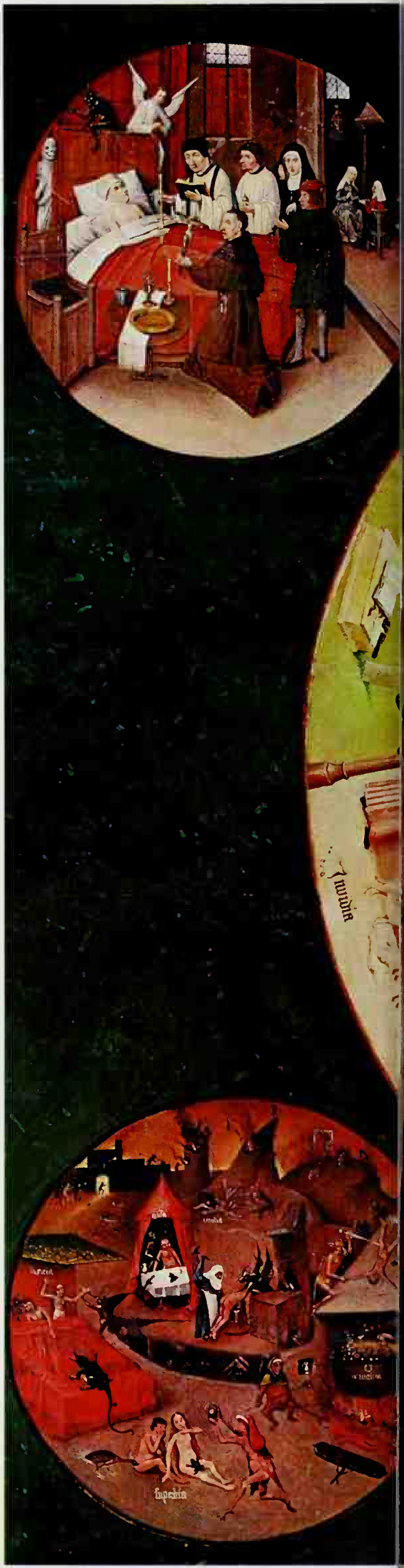
While no doubt every detail had for the artist its precise symbolic meaning it is a mark of the greatness of this painter-magician that he allows for complexities of interpretation. The huge birds that gaze so stolidly at the lovers' frolics may be taken to symbolize desire; but their size relative to that of the human figures also indicates a complete reversal of all proportions in this cosmos. It is a universe of thought and sensation which has gone ecstatically astray.

Whether such a painting could ever have been hung in a church seems doubtful. It has been suggested that it may have been painted for the heretical Adamites and that it was the Grand Master of this sect who dictated the scheme of erotic symbolism. This theory, put forward by the art historian Wilhelm Fränger, has been contested. An argument against it is that the Adamites can scarcely have relished its final scene of dissolution.

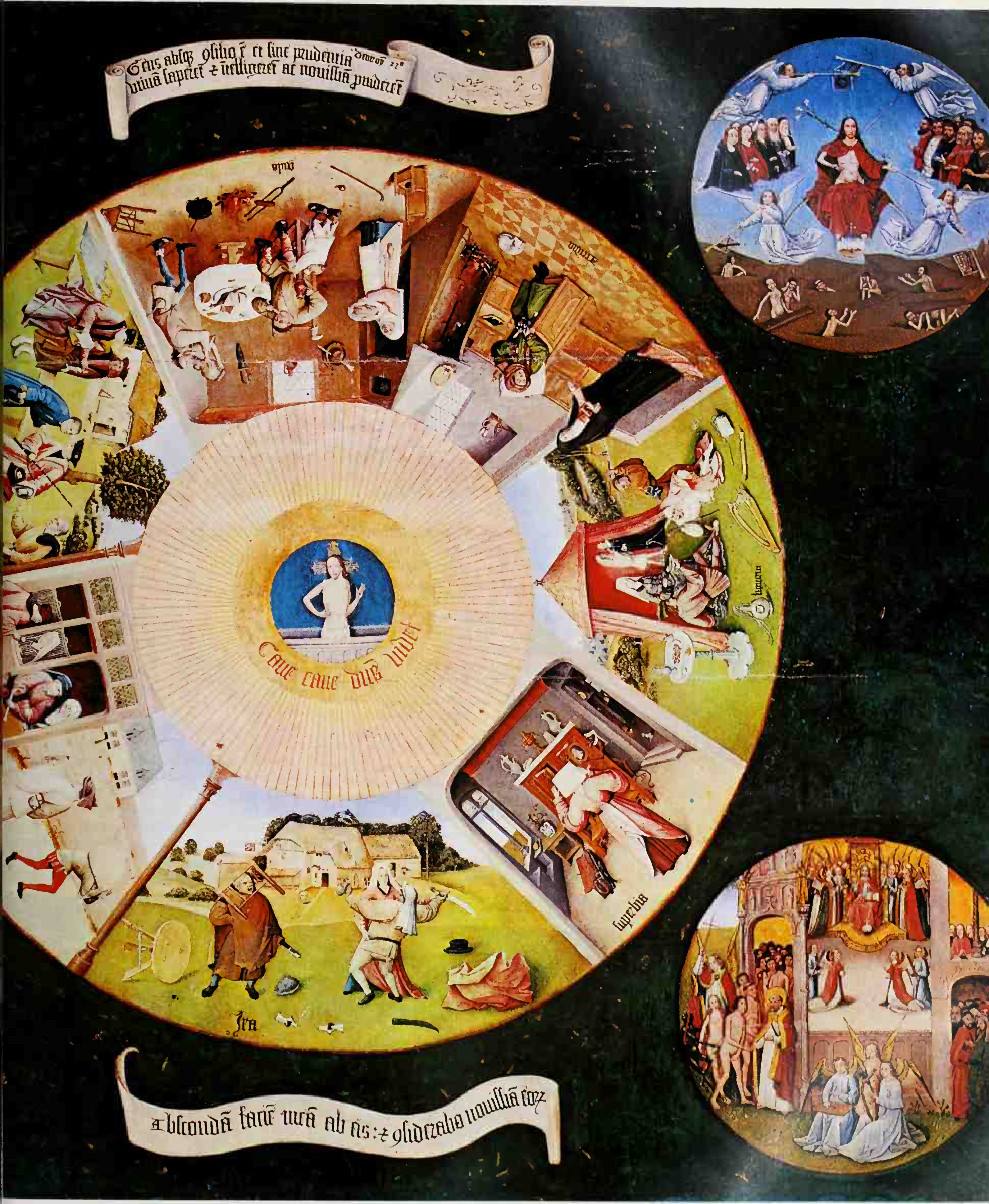
In the final phase of Bosch's work there is a perceptible easing of tension. His last painting, c1515, was a *Temptation of St Anthony* (Prado) notably different from the tumultuous version at Lisbon. In a more genial and fertile landscape than he had painted before, the saint sits wrapped in calm meditation, indifferent apparently to the fiendish alarms that have also diminished in number. The threats of a helmeted dwarf and a creature compounded of bird, robot and man-like ape, with raised hammer, do not move him. Miles away in thought as he sits on the bank of a stream, he ignores Satan swimming towards him with raised, clawed hand and a visage on which there seems written the desperation of one who fights a losing battle.

WILLIAM GAUNT

FURTHER READING: Charles de Tolnay, *Hieronymus Bosch* (Reynal, 1966).



Human vice surrounds the figure of Christ, with the words 'Beware, beware, God sees', in *Seven Deadly Sins*. The bottom panel shows anger and, going clockwise round the circle, the following sins are envy, avarice, gluttony, sloth, lust and pride


Gens absq consilio ē et sine prudentia Deutro 32°
utinā saperent & intelligerent ac novissima providerent
gula
avaricia
luxuria
superbia
Ira
Cave cave dūs videt
Abscondā faciē meā ab eis: & considerabo novissima eorū

In Hinduism, Brahma is the creator of the universe, one of a trinity with Shiva and Vishnu. But these three gods are personified manifestations of something greater: Brahman, the changeless, eternal principle which makes the universe what it is

BRAHMAN

FOR CENTURIES BRAHMAN has been the term used by the Hindus to designate the Absolute or God. The word has a very ancient history. In the earliest parts of the *Veda*, the sacred book of the Hindus, it means 'sacred utterance', thence 'sacred action' and 'the sacred' in general. What this 'sacred' was, was only dimly perceived at first: it was, however, felt to be supremely present in ritual – the 'power' behind the sacrifice. Only gradually did the word come to mean the supreme Principle of the universe: the 'sacred' became also the source of all that is sacred – it became God.

This development, however, was long and arduous, and is wholly unlike anything we are familiar with from the Bible. In the Bible God is the given fact of religious experience from the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis right up to the last verse of the Book of Revelation: his intense personality is continuously present from beginning to end. Brahman, on the other hand, works its way up from a relatively humble beginning as 'sacred utterance' to that of the supreme Principle of the universe. Even when this is achieved, it never becomes an acting and speaking God in any way comparable to the Old Testament Yahweh. It remains essentially the permanently pervading power within things, not an external power that issues commands and prohibitions. The existence of a supreme 'sacred power' comes to be taken for granted, but no serious attempt is made to identify it. The first attempts are crude: it is the sun, or the wind, or the breath of life, it is food or it is the Word, it is Being or Not-Being: it is everything and it is nothing.

It is only in the *Upanishads* (composed in c800 BC), the philosophical treatises that close the *Veda*, that the great 'identification' for which Hinduism is famous takes place: Brahman is Atman: Brahman is the self.

The word Atman also has a long history but by the time of the *Upanishads* it has come to mean simply 'self': it can mean either the self of an individual or the 'self' of the entire cosmos. If it is the latter, then it is already identical with Brahman, and the equation 'Brahman is Atman' would therefore be saying the same thing twice over. This is best illustrated by a quotation from one of the earliest *Upanishads:*

> The whole universe is Brahman . . . He who consists of mind, whose body is the breath of life, whose form is light, whose idea is the real, whose self is space, through whom are all works, all desires, all tastes, who encompasses this whole universe, who does not speak and who has no care – he is my Self within the heart, smaller than a grain of rice or a barley corn, or a mustard seed, or a grain of millet, or the kernel of a grain of millet; this is my Self within my heart, greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than all these worlds. All works, all desires, all scents, all tastes belong to it: it encompasses all this universe, does not speak and has no care. This my Self within the heart is that Brahman. When I depart from hence I shall merge into it. He who believes this will never doubt.

This means that the eternal, unchanging principle through which the whole universe coheres and which makes it what it is, is identical with what is more inward than the heart of man itself: both are changeless and essentially One: both are immortal and cannot die because both are exempt from the passage of time – in the context of which alone, death (and birth) can have any meaning. To 'merge into Brahman' then means to become eternal, to become one with the Eternal.

Brahman is essentially the God of the philosophers, the only certain characteristic of whom is that he does not change. Hence when it is said that a man 'becomes Brahman' it means that he has passed beyond all change: nothing can destroy him, and he is therefore 'free from fear' as Brahman is. In Buddhism it means no more than this; it means 'liberation' from space and time, not identification with any Absolute since the Buddhists were not interested in an Absolute in so far as it was divorced from experience. The Hindus, however, are incurable metaphysicians, concerned not only with the experience of eternity but also with explaining this transcendent experience in more or less rational terms.

This is the Self

'Whoever understands God, becomes God.' This definition of the Hindu theory of the relationship of the human soul to God is illuminating but needs some qualification. It is true that there has always been a trend in Indian philosophy to take the Brahman-Atman identification quite literally: there is the One eternal Principle, Brahman-Atman, which alone really *is*. If this is so, this school of thought goes on to argue, then all variety and multiplicity must be illusory. This means that because every human self is identical with Brahman, they must consequently be identical with each other. In such a system 'you' and 'I' are meaningless terms since there is only one abiding reality of which 'you' and 'I' are, when all is said and done, ultimately illusory manifestations.

If reality is absolutely single and unchanging, it follows that change is unreal. Since not only our lives but the quality of them are rooted in change, it follows that from the point of view of the Absolute, Brahman, they must be unreal and therefore meaningless. By definition Brahman 'has no care': he or it does not care because if he did he would cease to be indivisibly

Camera Press London

A Brahmin, regarded as a god on earth, and the human repository of the sacred power of Brahman

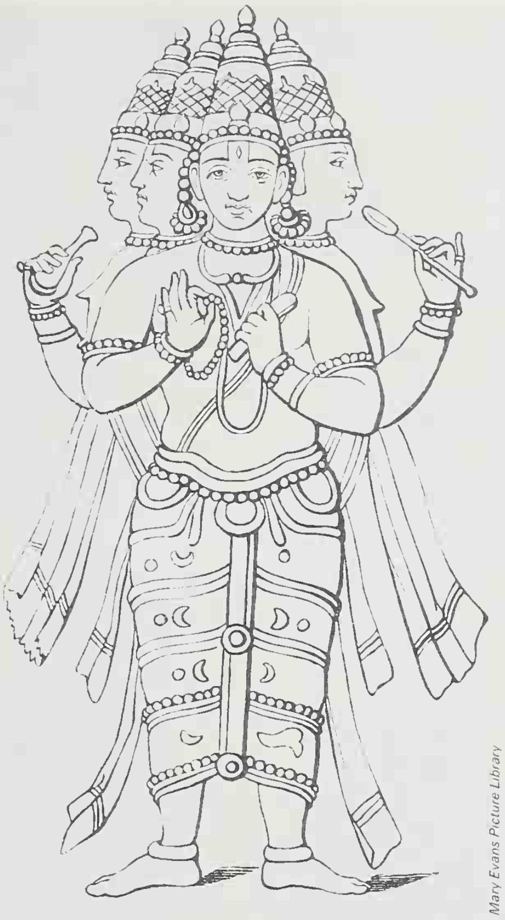
Below **A Brahmin worshipping the god Shiva, the Destroyer, himself a manifestation of Brahman 'the One, the abiding reality'**

One. Neither Brahman nor the 'liberated' self which realizes itself as Brahman can then be touched or affected by what we commonly call good and evil:

> This Self . . . is impalpable, for it cannot be grasped; indestructible for it cannot be destroyed; free from attachment, for it is not attached to anything, not bound. It does not quaver, nor can it be hurt.
>
> Whoever knows this – these thoughts do not occur to him: 'So, I have done evil' or 'So I have done good' . . . Evil does not touch him: all evil he shrugs off. Evil does not torment him; all evil he burns out.

But if one adheres to the view that Reality is unbreakably One and changeless, then it follows that the God who acts must himself be illusory; this makes nonsense not only of morality but also of religion. This *philosophical* view had therefore to be abandoned by the *religious* consciousness which demands worship, since worship implies a distinction between the worshipper and the Worshipped.

Hence Brahman came to be viewed in two ways – as it is in itself, unqualifiably One, and as it presents itself to the world, the omnipotent and omniscient Lord God who originates, sustains and destroys the universe. In both respects – the unqualified and the qualified – Brahman is now defined as Being, Consciousness, and Joy: it has taken on a positive content. Even so the Deity, when it is referred to as Brahman, remains the ultimate Absolute; it is not the object of worship.


Mary Evans Picture Library

The four-headed god Brahma, the creator of the world and man, a personification of one aspect of Brahman

Creator, Sustainer, Destroyer

Brahman is neuter in gender. There is, however, also a masculine Brahma but this is merely the creative aspect of the ultimate One. In later Hinduism the two personal gods who between them claimed the devotion of the great majority of Hindus – Shiva and Vishnu – came to be associated with this Brahma in a kind of trinity in which Brahma was seen as the Creator, Vishnu as the Sustainer, and Shiva as the Destroyer of the universe. All three of them, however, were only manifestations of the One, the abiding reality, Brahman.

But Brahman was also 'sacred power' and the Brahmanas, or Brahmins as they are usually called, were therefore regarded as human repositories of this power: they were quite literally gods on earth, each and all of them being so many incarnations of the Absolute.

This is the metaphysical basis on which the Brahmin caste is based and is the justification for what seem to us to be the grotesque pretensions of the system. Essentially, however, Brahman has remained 'that than which one can conceive of nothing higher'; Brahman is 'unseen, one with whom there is no commerce, impalpable, devoid of distinguishing mark, unthinkable, indescribable, its essence the firm conviction of the oneness of itself, bringing all development to an end, tranquil and mild, devoid of duality . . . That is the Self: that is what should be known.' That is Brahman.

(See also HINDUISM; SHIVA; VISHNU.)

R. C. ZAEHNER

BRAN

BRAN THE BLESSED plays a major role in one of the 'Four Branches' of the collection of medieval Welsh tales known as the *Mabinogion*, probably to be dated to the second part of the 11th century, but containing material that is much older. In the story of *Branwen daughter of Llyr* Bran figures as King of Britain, but his divine origins are clearly discernible. He is described as being so huge that no house could ever be built big enough to contain him. He is just and generous, the possessor of a magic cauldron which could restore the dead to life, a patron of the arts and a true king to his people. Bran's sister is Branwen, and her unfortunate marriage to the King of Ireland touches off a story of tragedy and magic.

The name Bran means 'raven' and because of this attempts have been made to dentify Bran as a raven god. There is in fact insufficient evidence in the surviving mythology to support this theory.

When Bran and his followers set out to nvade Ireland the people go in ships, but Bran wades, carrying the musicians on his back. It is he who acts as a bridge, hurdles being placed on his body to allow people to cross over. Bran is fatally wounded in the ensuing battle; he commands that his head be struck off and carried to the White Mount n London and buried with its face looking towards France.

The Celts worshipped the human head, believing it to be capable of life, independently of the body. They thought it had powers of averting evil, and could be used as a talisman. They credited it with powers of prophecy and wisdom, fertility and hospitality, and believed it could move of its own accord. They frequently used the head in their religious art to symbolize the total divine being (see HEAD). Bran's severed head fulfils all the functions attributed to sacred godheads. It remains uncorrupted, a cheerful companion at feasts in the strange and magic land in which Bran's companions eventually find themselves.

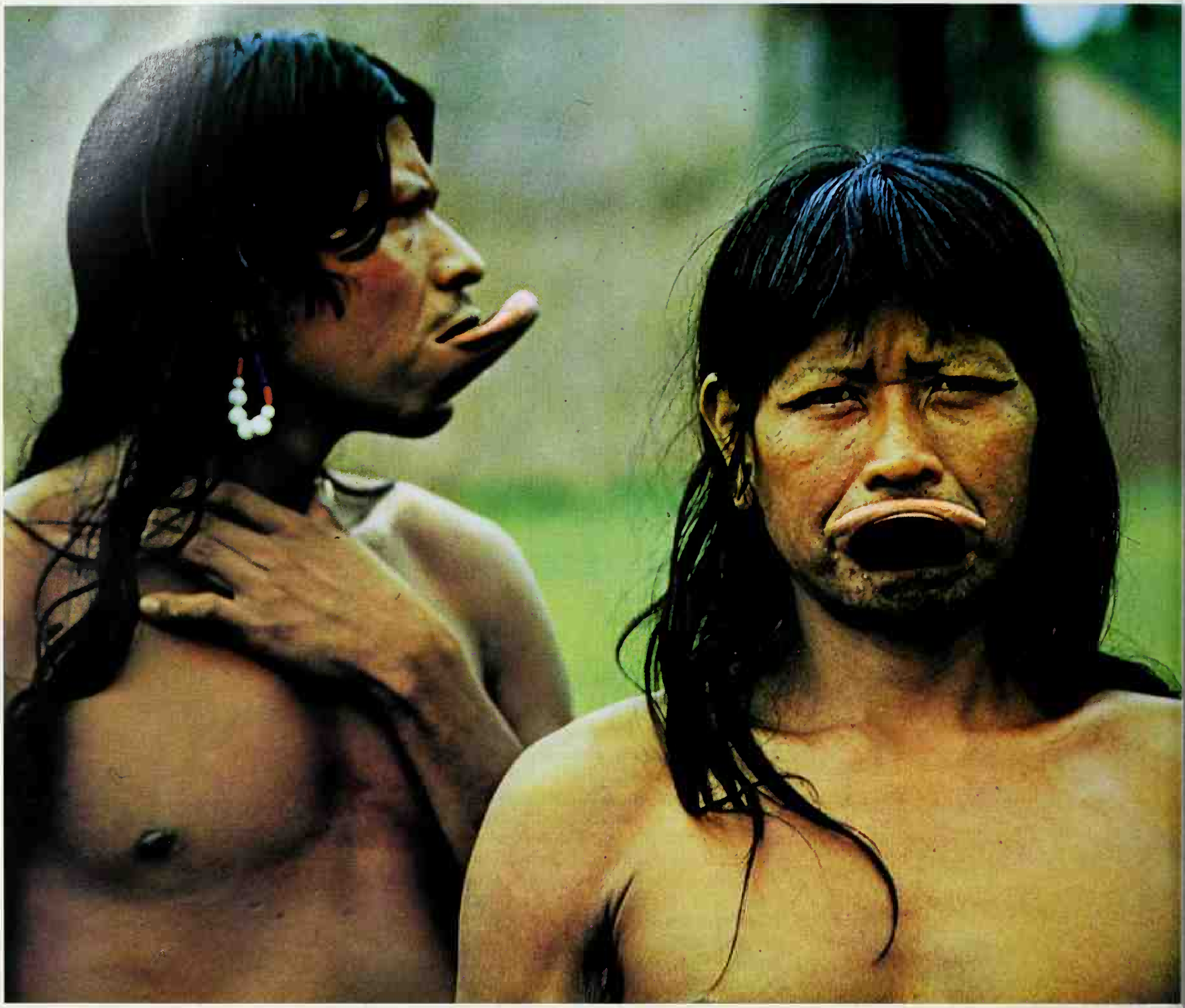
After fourscore years have passed in the otherworld, one of the seven men at the feasting opens a forbidden door to test the truth of Bran's prophecies and at once the seven are back in the everyday world and remember their sorrows. They then take Bran's head to London as he had requested and bury it there. The head becomes capable of speech, of averting invasion and warding off plague until it is ultimately disclosed, when its powers cease. The epithet 'Blessed', *Bendigeit*, with its Christian connotation is probably a rendering of a pagan title.

The Magic Branch

The story of the adventures of another Bran, the son of Febail, has associations with the otherworld. (Whether Bran the Blessed and Bran, son of Febail, are one and the same is uncertain.) It is a tale of magic in which the human hero journeys to the otherworld and remains there indefinitely. The tale, known as 'The Voyage of Bran', was written down probably as early as the 8th century. The theme of the story is well known in Irish literature: the hero is enticed by a goddess to the otherworld and his adventures there are glowingly described. One day he is out walking near his home when he hears sweet music which sends him to sleep. He wakes up to find a silver branch with white flowers on it beside him and he takes it into his house. A strange woman appears there, and sings of the wonders of the otherworld and persuades him to visit it. When she leaves, the magic branch springs from his hand into hers. He sets out with 27 companions to look for the marvellous land.

Bran meets the sea god, Mannanan mac Lir, driving his chariot on the sea, which to the god is a flowery plain. The deity also chants verses to him in which he prophesies the coming of Christ, and tells how he, Mannanan, will beget a son, Mongan, who will undergo many changes in form. This Mongan is stated to be a reincarnation of the divine hero, Finn mac Cumaill (see FINN).

Many years pass but to the wanderers in the otherworld they seem but a brief space of time. At length one of them longs to visit Ireland again, and they return. When they reach the shore, the homesick man leaps out of the boat and turns into a pile of ashes when he touches the soil of Ireland. Bran then relates the wonders of the otherworld to the crowd which has gathered to look at the voyagers. Bran and his men then go back to the enchanted land, never to return.



BRAZIL

Early European explorers were astonished by such customs as comperage, in which the Indians gave women to their European guests, cannibalism and the ritual execution of prisoners, and the men's habit of piercing holes in their lips or cheeks through which protruded plugs of wood or stone

Ritual execution and religious cannibalism were encountered by early explorers among the tribes of Brazil. Today this vast country still presents complex patterns of mythological belief and strange practices

WHEN IT WAS first discovered by Europeans, the coast of Brazil was populated by a number of tribes which nearly all had the same customs and shared the Tupi language. They lived in stockaded villages, several hundred inhabitants to each house, and four houses to each village. They hunted for game in the forest, fished, farmed, and waged war on each other in a systematic way to capture prisoners who were later ritually executed and then eaten. As the interior was explored more deeply, quite different tribes were found. A large group of these, speaking the Ge language, roam the country during the dry season to hunt and gather food, returning to their villages and plantations during the wet season. They have a complicated social organization, being divided into clans and groups of inter-tribal marriages.

Some tribes are nomadic all the year round, but in the Amazon basin there is a large group of settled tribes belonging to the Arawak and Carib cultures, whose main focus is in the Guyanas and the Caribbean. It is a vast country, and there is no single pattern of custom and belief. The early chroniclers who encountered the Tupi-speaking tribes wrote detailed reports of the savage paradise in which they found themselves. They tried to understand such customs as comperage, in which the Indians gave women to their European guests; the men's habit of piercing holes in their lips and cheeks, through which protruded sharp plugs of wood, stone or resin, like the fangs of jaguars; and of course cannibalism, which they put down. The common justification of cannibalism is that by eating the flesh of an enemy warrior you absorb his manly virtues. For the Tupi, the principal virtue was that of courage, but the fact that the wives of chiefs were given the genitals of a dead prisoner shows that his sexuality was also esteemed. The virtue of courage, however, was intimately linked to the idea of revenge. The ghosts of those who had died, either naturally or in wars to get prisoners, had to be placated by capturing an enemy and clubbing him ritually to death. These prisoners were first adopted into the captor's family, given a young girl as wife, and sometimes lived in captivity for twenty years before being put to death. Strangely enough to our eyes, prisoners seldom tried to escape, for to die in the land of their enemies was a sure passport to immortality in the Indian heaven.

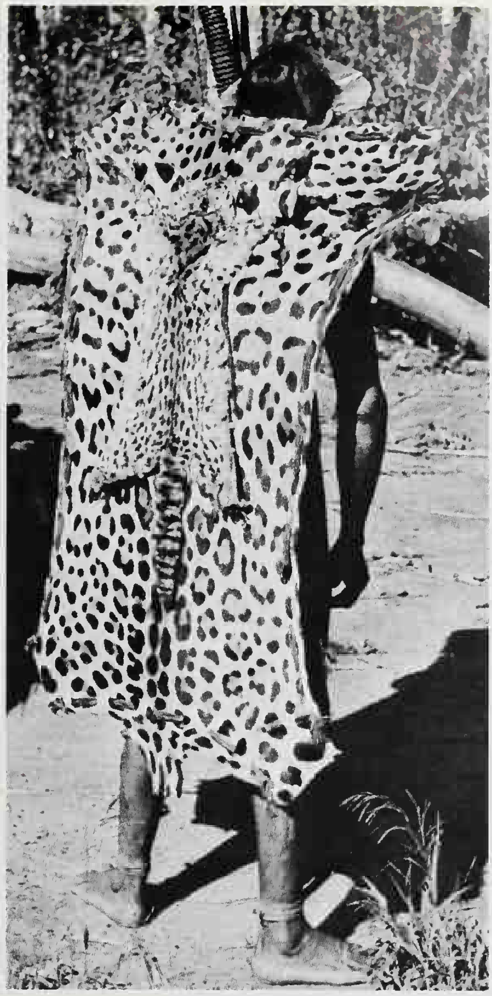
The Great Walker

There are few overt references to cannibalism in Brazilian mythology. The main figure is called Maira and is halfway between a god and a hero. He is sometimes called the Walker, in honour of the great journeys the Tupi excelled in, and sometimes the Maker. He did not, however, create the world in its entirety, but transformed what was already in existence into an order in which human beings could live: he was thus a culture hero, giving the main rudiments of their social life to the Indians.

One myth deals with Maira in the shape of a young child who, when wandering in the woods, was met by a poor widow and her children gathering food. Thinking he was about to stop them, the children began to beat him, an act in which he encouraged them – for as the blows fell, it began to rain edible roots, fruit and vegetables, in fact all the food plants the Tupi now grow. Later, when Maira had reassumed adult form, he visited the Indians. Though wanting to give him proper homage for his generosity, the Indians also wished to be quite sure of his identity. They made him jump over three fires, in the second of which he died, his head exploding like thunder.

It is the usual fate of a culture hero to be a stranger, and to die at the hands of those he has befriended. Myths from other tribes show that the theme of the young boy producing food plants when he is beaten is allied to initiation rites, when a youth becomes a man. These rites usually deal with a number of novices at the same time. The Tupi initiation rite, however, was individualistic: a youth proved himself by executing a prisoner, after which he went into seclusion for some months, endured ordeals such as the scarification of his body, took a new name, and was then able to marry.

A jaguar was sometimes dealt with in the same way as a prisoner. An explanatory story from the Tupi-speaking Urubu tribe tells how a man avenged his brother's death by following the cannibalistic murderer to an underground village of jaguars, and killing the chief who was dressed up in his ritual feather regalia. It is this feather regalia which all men now wear, especially for ceremonial occasions, that was originally the property of the jaguar; and other beliefs show us that this jaguar is an aspect of the culture hero himself.


Harald Schultz

Man of the Umutina Indians of the Matto Grosso in the interior of Brazil wearing the skins of a jaguar and a wild cat. The jaguar plays an important part in Brazilian Indian beliefs. In some cases the hero who long ago gave a tribe its culture and social organization was a jaguar; some believe that the sun takes the form of a jaguar at night, and many of the shamans, or priests, are possessed by the jaguar spirit and turn into jaguars after death

The feather head-dress is an image of the sun, and the hero lives in the house of the sun in the east. At night he has to pass from the west underground, when he puts on a jaguar shape, to go back to his birthplace. Often the souls of the dead are thought to accompany the daytime sun, and anyone dressing up in the feather regalia is imitating this heroic state. Significantly, the Tupi prisoner was dressed up in just this way, and various rites transformed him into something approaching a chief as well, that is, a representative of the village where he was to be executed. More particularly, he was transformed into a kind of ritual brother-in-law.

Cannibal Wives

A study of mythology shows that the jaguar is regarded as a brother-in-law throughout South America. Sex always has curious associations with eating and the killing of game, a symbolic equation that has much to do with the operation of the incest taboo. The consequence of this taboo, of course, is to stop a man marrying in his own immediate family, however that is defined. Everyone being in the same position, the simplest solution is to give your sister to another man as his wife in exchange for his sister. When such an exchange is not possible, the husband has to pay for his wife by working for his in-laws. This happened regularly among the Tupi, and such were the antagonisms created by the system that the same word did duty both for brother-in-law and for enemy. The word was *tobajara*, meaning, in effect, the rival with whom you have a competition for honour. The jaguar, who rivals man in killing game, is used in myth as the figure to denote the rival in sexuality and marriage.

The enemy captive was a rival of this kind. He was given a wife by his captor and so, like any husband, had to do menial work for him. But he was unlike the usual run of husbands in that he was treated with much affection instead of with the customary disdain and avoidance, and indeed he was called 'the loved one'.

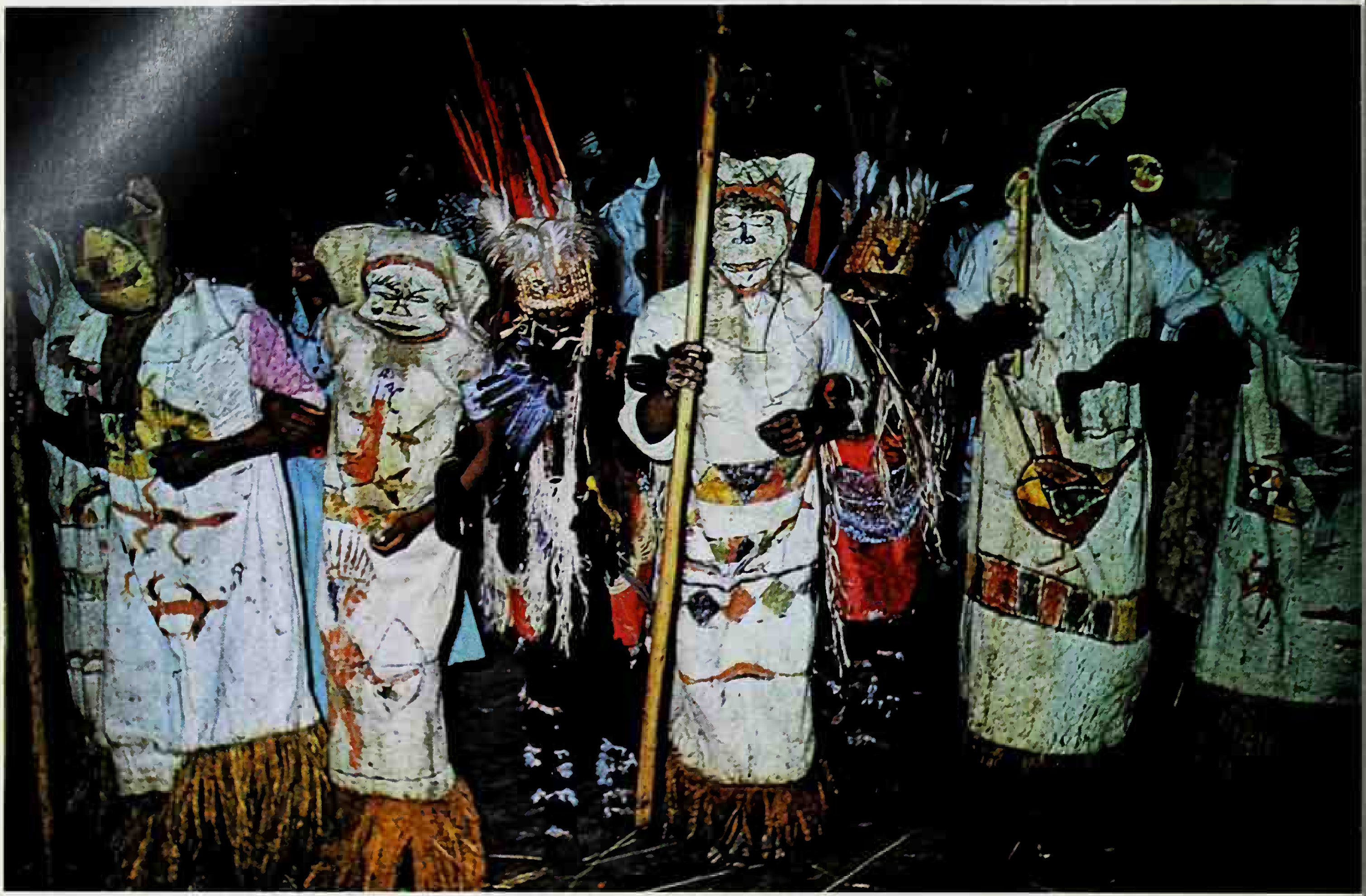
Here we may see an interesting parallel with the vegetation gods of the Middle East, dying yearly amid the laments of the women. However, the Tupi women, even the prisoner's wife herself, made no bones about eating the prisoner. They were even more voracious cannibals than the men, who saw the rite partly as an opportunity to gain prestige for themselves. Throughout the country, the ideal of men is to be hard in body and mind, to be wakeful, abstinent, capable of great physical endurance and of undergoing painful ordeals such as scarification, liquid pepper in the eyes, fasting, or being stung by the largest and most venomous wasps and ants.

The Reign of Women

This masculine ideal is set against the feminine characteristic of softness and sleepiness. Several mythologies tell how death came to men because they were too sleepy to answer the call of a tree whose bark regularly comes off in sheets, and which had the gift of immortality. Masculine virtue is thus aimed at immortality and power. The lethargy, which all are afflicted with, stems from mythological times when it was the women rather than the men who had charge of things. The story is of wide occurrence in South America. Sometimes it describes how the women found what were to be the sacred flutes of the tribe, the representatives of the ancestors, by which means they kept the men in subjection. Nowadays the men, having successfully revolted, have the care of these instruments together with that of the entire religious apparatus and it is death for a woman or an uninitiated youth to see them.

Tupi myth also tells of this reign of women, who did all the work while the men, who had no genitals, lolled in their hammocks like children. The women satisfied their sexuality by calling a giant snake from under the ground, on whose raised head they took their pleasure. This custom continued till a young boy discovered what was happening and cut off the snake's head. The women took offence and left. It was then that Maira took charge by fashioning male members for the men out of the snake's body and sewing them in place, reserving the head for himself. Appeased in this way, the women returned, and the men took command.

This story deals with an adolescent fantasy which often goes with initiation. Tupi



Masked and robed figures representing dangerous spirits, which have emerged from the forest to attend the initiation of young girls, among the Tikuna Indians of the Upper Solimoes River

youths tied a piece of string around their foreskins to hide their shame, while men wore the penis sheath. The significance of this can be seen among the Bororo, where youths live in their mothers' houses until they are initiated, when they must go to the Men's House at the centre of the village. There they are given a penis sheath and are then ready for marriage. During this lengthy rite, the penis sheath is called the boy's wife, and is a substitute for the sister he cannot marry: instead he marries the daughter of the man who gives him the sheath. The myth of the reign of women plainly relates to this situation.

Battle of the Sexes

Initiation always deals with the separation of a boy from his mother, and his adoption into the society of men. Often one finds the institution of a Men's House or type of club in tribes like the Mundurucu, where men have to live with their wives' families, instead of the wife living with the husband's family: it becomes a 'home from home' where the strains of being a perpetual in-law are not felt. At the same time it is the place where the men celebrate their independence from women in religious form, with the help of masks, dances, songs, musical instruments and mysteries.

Besides the competition for honour between men there is thus a battle between the sexes. The serpent, who is the private lover of women, has to be killed by men, whereupon a sound relation between the sexes can be established through marriage. The north-western tribes tell a story which is a complication of this theme. It deals with a young man suspected of being a cannibal, who is killed by his own people and turns into a palm tree. The sacred flutes, often kept under water when not needed, are carved from the trunk of this tree, and a beer made from its fruit. Whenever an important man dies, his body is burnt and the ashes mixed with the beer, which everyone then drinks in commemoration of him. It is all part of the initiation theme, for the hut where the novices are secluded is often thought of as a cannibalistic monster, serpent or water-demon, which has to be killed in order for the youths to emerge as newborn men.

The name of the cannibal palm-tree spirit is Jurupari, who has become one of the bogeymen throughout Brazil, for those of European and African descent as much as for the Indians. He is the master of the jungle, and is much feared. Among the Cashinawa tribe, elements of the Jurupari myth appear in the figure of a Rolling Head, who creates the moon and the rainbow – the form taken by the great serpent when it is killed.

The Tupi say that the moon was once a man who committed incest with his sister, and the Jurupari stories may have a similar background. In any case, it is this moon man who must be ritually killed, like the Tupi prisoner, in imitation of the moon's monthly birth and death. Among the Bororo people, this moon man is the brother of the sun. Among the Arawak tribes, the sun and moon are also brothers, the sun creating useful animals and the moon harmful ones. Sometimes they are figured as the jaguar and the anteater – a dangerous animal when roused – who quarrel over who is the stronger. The jaguar says that he is, since he eats flesh while the other eats only ants, but the anteater replies that this can only be proved by an examination of their faeces. By a trick he contrives to exchange the jaguar's excrement for his own, leaving the jaguar humiliated.

The Tupi also have a story concerning twins. Their mother is the wife of Maira who leaves her when she disbelieves in his magical powers. Already pregnant with his child, she follows him but is seduced by Mikur the opossum, who fathers the other child by her; she then comes to a village of jaguars where she is killed, and the twins are brought up by a jaguar grandmother. When they are adult they avenge their mother by killing all the jaguars but one, who is allowed to escape by Mikur's son, and then go in search of their father. When they find him he puts them through a number of tests and ordeals, such as having to pass through the Clashing Rocks, in which Mikur's son is always killed and has to be brought back to life by his brother.

Playing Possum

There are many possible interpretations of such a myth. One certainly deals with the distinction between the mortal body and the immortal soul. The fact that the opossum's son dies and is brought back to life points to the particular manifestation of this belief in shamanism. The shaman's trance is likened to a death, especially that mock death known as 'playing possum', from which comes part of the significance of this animal.

Shamanism is sometimes hereditary, father training son in the techniques of the craft. More often the vocation descends on a man, after a period of psychological disorder or shock, in which he rushes into the woods and returns unable to think or speak clearly and smelling like a corpse – oppossums, it should be noted, also have an unpleasant odour. He is then trained to recognize the spirit which confronted him, usually that of a bird or animal. He acquires the ability to be possessed by it and eventually by others, the chief of which is the jaguar spirit. The shaman's equipment usually includes the gourd rattle or maraca, which to some Indians speaks with the voice of the spirits. He may use a variety of plant drugs to help him into trance, usually tobacco, together with techniques such as exaggerated over-breathing. His seances take place at night, for spirits are fearful of light, and he may put on a remarkable theatrical performance in which he talks to the spirits; they reply with shrieks, bellows, groans and roars.

The shaman, then, is a man who can separate soul from body without actually dying, and who is able to travel to the sky or below the earth in search of the souls of his patients which have been stolen away. The loss of one's soul is a common complaint amongst Indians, and often occurs when someone sees a ghost in the jungle or the Tupi Anyang, a hostile spirit who is covered with long hair, is of a greenish colour, has no bones in his body, and performs obscene antics. But Indians may also suffer from an invasion by spirits or by disease, which must then be extracted. This the shaman does by first blowing on the afflicted part with tobacco smoke, the vehicle of spiritual power, and then sucking out the disorder, which he expels with an explosive sound from his mouth. Sometimes he also produces a piece of meat, a worm, a thorn or stone as the material embodiment of the spirit or disease.

Celestial Jaguar

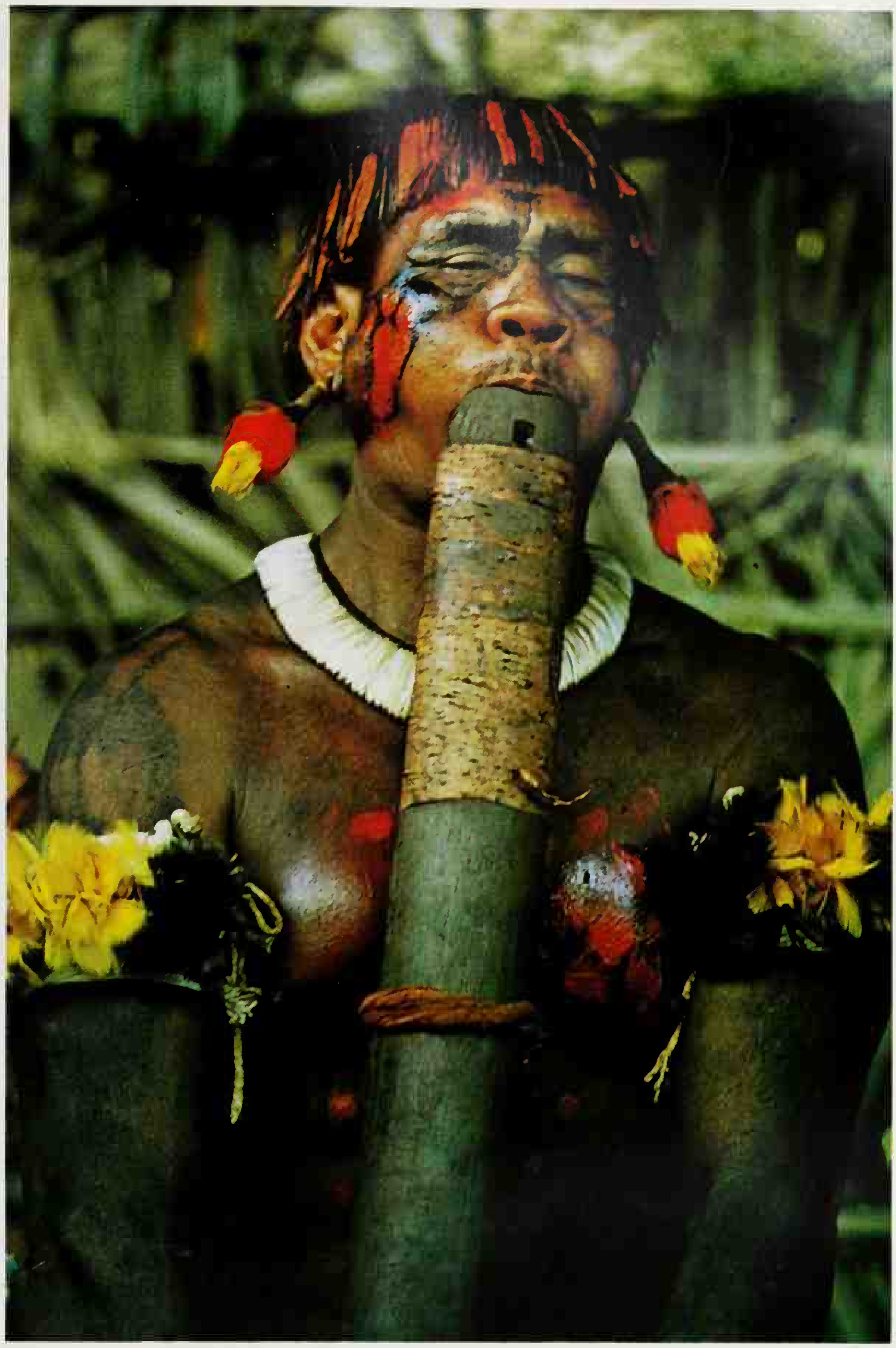
The shaman is always a powerful figure, and the Tupi shaman rivalled the chief. Several large villages might band together to form a primitive federation during war, and one of the largest of these groups was headed by a shaman. This was not merely on account of the fear he inspired, but because of his visionary powers.

One of the strangest phenomena witnessed by the early colonists was the series of migrations which occurred at intervals under the leadership of a shaman, who inspired whole populations with visions of the Land without Evil, and who took on the main attributes of the culture hero Maira in doing so.

Thousands of Indians died during these treks, both from starvation and from the attacks of their enemies. Such beliefs in a Promised Land are still common today, and they are frequently the result of a technically advanced culture meeting a more primitive one.

Tupi myth says that Maira set fire to the world and then flooded it, as a punishment for men's ingratitude. Ge-speaking Indians still believe this may happen; one of their ceremonies, which takes place round a sun-pole, is partly intended to ward off this danger. These Indians originally lived in a part of Brazil plagued by drought and flood, so their belief is understandable. South of Brazil, however, there is the idea that a Celestial Jaguar will one day make an end to the world, and in Brazil proper many tribes think of eclipses as the swallowing of sun or moon by a jaguar, as a punishment for the sins of mankind. Tupi messianism – belief in the coming of a saviour god – is all part of this pattern: it is still concerned with the Jaguar who gave them culture, who made them compete among themselves for honour, and who must be placated if they are not to eat each other up entirely.

FRANCIS HUXLEY


Times Newspapers

Kamaiura Indian praying for the rains to stop so that the fishing season can begin. The wooden flute is the instrument through which he speaks to the gods

BREAD

BECAUSE of its vital importance from the cradle to the grave, bread has many sacred associations; it is surrounded by ceremonies and superstitions which derive from its original association with the corn spirit. At one time at the sowing of the corn, the soil was fertilized by sacrificial human blood. The spirit of the corn, sometimes represented by a human victim bound in wheatsheaves, was ritually killed at harvest time (see CORN).

This theme of the first and last fruits of the field dominates the rites of bread. In north-west India the first of the grain is formally presented to one of the family; in the Russian Volga region it was the custom for the village elder to present a portion of the first bread of the new harvest to each member of the community. A Swedish traditional rite, revealing traces of sacrifice, involves the baking of the last sheaf into a loaf shaped like a young girl.

Proof of the Loaf

Bread played a prominent role in the primitive European system of trial by ordeal in which accused persons attempted to prove their innocence by eating a piece of bread and butter; if they choked they were considered guilty. In 1619 the witch Joan Flower swallowed a mouthful of bread and butter, declaring that 'she wished it might never go through her if she were guilty', and dropped dead.

The baking of bread had its special taboos. A menstruating woman was prohibited from participating in the kneading, as it was believed that her touch prevented the dough from rising. Another was the marking of a cross on the dough to prevent it from falling into the hands of Satan. Bread baked on Good Friday was held to retain its freshness and the woman who baked it was considered highly blessed. The Russians, however, regarded all Fridays as ominous for baking, and Good Friday even more so.

Household bread was equally valued both as a medicine and as a magic charm by corngrowing peoples. In Belgium stale bread placed in the cradle was thought to protect the baby; in Egypt it was considered a cure for indigestion; in Morocco it was an accepted specific against stammering. In Britain and the United States, bread thrown into the fire is said to feed the devil.

The Sin Eater

There are a number of popular superstitions concerning the magical aspects of bread. A long hole in the loaf portends a death in the household. A curious tradition that it is unlucky to take the last slice of bread on a plate is widespread in Britain and America. For a single woman to do so means that she will remain an old maid. Also in the United States, it is bad luck to turn a loaf upside down – if one falls that way, it portends a quarrel.

Bread has also figured in the lore of sea and weather. Sailors believe that to cut a loaf and turn it upside down causes a ship to sink. In the belief that storms can be averted bread is placed on the window-sill in Spain facing the direction of the anticipated outbreak.

Camera Press London

Bread is the 'staff of life', the food which sustains man's body, and in Christian symbolism the Body of Christ, the spiritual food which sustains man's soul. The breaking of the sacred bread at the Mass, in imitation of Christ's breaking of bread at the Last Supper

A remarkable quality formerly ascribed to bread was its power to react to the presence of a drowned body. It was believed that a loaf weighted with quicksilver and placed in the water would be irresistibly drawn towards the place where the body lay. As recently as 1921 a corpse was discovered after this method had been tried at Wheelock in Cheshire.

Bread had an important function in connection with the Last Rites. Until a century ago it was not uncommon for an old man, called a Sin Eater, to be hired to take upon himself all the sins of the newly dead, in return for sixpence, a bowl of beer, and a loaf which had been in contact with a corpse. The idea behind this practice was that it would enable the soul of the dead person to proceed directly to Paradise (see SIN EATER).

FURTHER READING: Christina Hole, *English Folklore* (Scribner, 1940); Ronald Sheppard and Edward Norton, *The Story of Bread* (Fernhill, 1957).

BREATH

Element of Life and Soul

Breathing air into the lungs is the first action after birth – and death comes with the final breath. Since air is life, it has been identified with man's soul or spiritual essence in many religions. Learning to control breathing is therefore the basis of many Eastern paths to spiritual enlightenment

THE FIRST MAN, according to the book of Genesis, was fashioned from earth by the hand of God, who then breathed life into him through his nose – a process imagined by some commentators as being like the blowing up of a bladder. God 'breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.' This connection between breath and the source of life is found in many religions and myths.

In a legend of the Australian aborigines, for instance, the god Pundjel fashioned two male figures from a mixture of clay and bark. After smoothing the bodies by a series of magical passes encompassing them from head to foot, he then lay upon them – each in turn – and blew into their mouths, their nostrils and their navels. After some time they came to life and moved about.

Similarly a commentator on the Koran says that the body of Adam was originally a clay figure which took 40 years to dry, after which God endowed it with the breath of life. The name Adam is a Hebrew word possibly coming from a root which means 'red' and so connected with the red clay of the first man's body. The red colour further connected it with blood, the 'water of life', in the sense that without blood a man dies.

According to Saturnius and Basilides (who taught at Antioch and Alexandria respectively in the 2nd century AD), the first man was made by seven evil angels, led by the god of the Jews, who said, 'Come, let us make man after our image.' They fashioned a being of enormous proportions but it could only crawl along the ground until the good supreme Creator himself endowed it with air, the divine spirit or soul. In other words, it needed to be impregnated with *pneuma* (in Greek) or *prana* (in Sanskrit) – terms which refer not to mere breath but to life-giving vital air or 'spirit'. Only after this could the crawling creature stand upright and become truly a man.

The identity of breath and soul is established in early mythologies of widely separated peoples. In Fiji, for instance, people suffering from bronchitis or asthma were considered to run the risk of losing their souls. A magician was employed to capture the sick man's 'butterfly' (as his wavering breath was called) and secure it firmly to the body again. This he did with spells and conjurations. Also in Fiji, when the canoe of a chief was launched, a number of men were sacrificed so that their souls (or breath) might supply a wind of good luck for the sails of the craft.

In ancient times the breath of the dying was believed to re-enter the living. The Algonquins buried their dead children in frequented places so that the souls might re-enter future mothers there. A similar idea is at the root of a Roman custom which entitled the nearest relative of a dying person to inhale the final breath.

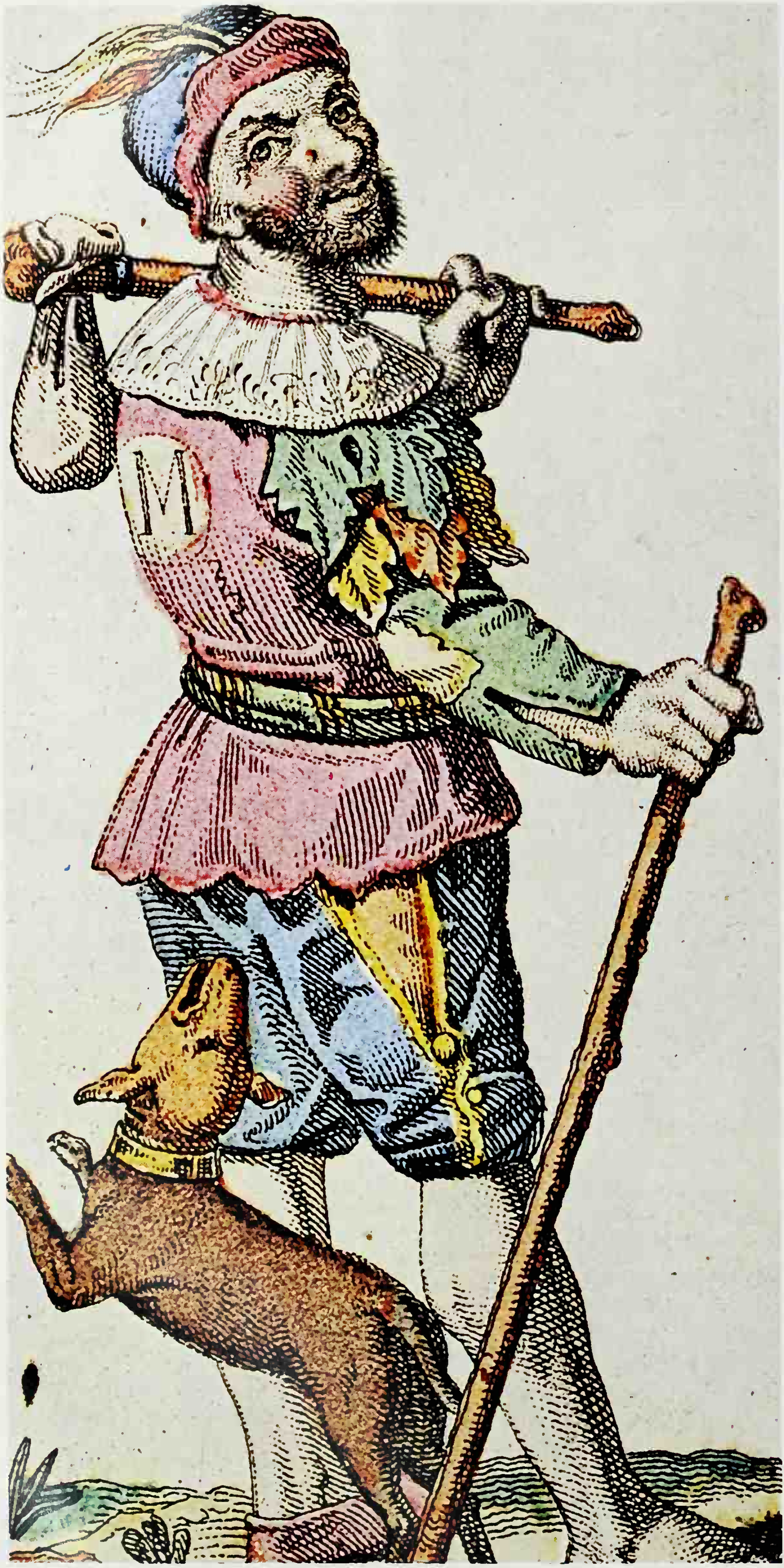
Pregnant by the Wind

Since air was life – men and animals cannot live without it, any more than without blood – it was thought possible that a woman might be impregnated by it. In Egypt the vulture, Maut, was supposed to reproduce her species by the intervention of the wind; the Virgin Mary was also said to have conceived at the impulse of a breath.

Some Arabic legends relate that Mary conceived by the breath of the angel Gabriel; in another Arabic account of the Immaculate

Roger Wood

The Egyptian goddess Maat, who was begotten by air and first appeared as an egg, but later adopted a more conventional shape



Brompton Studio

Conception, a dove descends upon her, inspiring her with the word or breath and the word is made flesh. The angel, like the dove associated with Mary, is a winged creature whose natural element is air. The dove was the bird of breath, air or soul. It belonged to the Egyptian goddess of love, Hathor, and to other love goddesses and mother goddesses. A dove-like bird is shown enveloping a statue of Juno, the Roman queen of the sky or air, at Hierapolis in Syria; it appears in the shape of a pigeon carved in gold.

The dove, as the bird of air and the spirit of God, also stood for the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. In the New Testament – in the gospels of St Matthew and St Luke – it is the Holy Ghost who impregnates the Virgin Mary. St Mark and St John describe how the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove descended into Jesus when he was baptized in the river Jordan (see also DOVE).

Air was not only the substance of the divine Spirit but also the home of spirits in the plural. Angels, demons, ghosts and the fairies called 'sylphs' inhabited the air. The word 'sylph' was used for the winged air-sprites which belonged to air as one of the four elements, the basic materials of which everything in the world was thought to be made (see ELEMENTS).

These conceptions grew out of the earliest embodiments of storm, hurricane, wind, rain, night and day, which man's early reasoning likened to the various animals that surrounded him, and which he thought of in animal form. As time went by, he conceived of weird imaginary combinations of animal and bird forms which he thought peopled the storm, the darkness and the kingdoms of the four elements.

In ancient Egypt, breath or air was typified by a human-headed bird which accompanied the deceased in the underworld called Amenta. Its winged form relates it to the air, and shows its kinship with angels and other aerial beings which assumed important roles in later beliefs and customs.

Left **The Fool, a card from a 19th century Tarot pack, connected with air in the sense of emptiness – the Nothing that was before anything existed, but which contained the potential existence of all things *Above right* The ancient Egyptians visualized air as a human-headed bird, which accompanied the dead to the underworld**

Eliphas Levi said that if a man breathes in a certain way upon the back of a woman's neck she will automatically surrender to his will

Michael Holford

Spirits Proud and Wrathful

Incense, representing the breath of life, is another aspect of this symbolism. It was presented to the dead together with an offering of blood, the mystical 'water of life'. The incense or breath was thought to pervade the blood, which stood for the red clay, the earth from which plants grow or the body of the first man brought to life by the breath of God. And so the double offering stood for the instilling of life into matter. The dead man could use the offered blood to make a material clothing for his spirit, so that he would be able to appear visibly on earth as a ghost.

According to some Jewish magicians, the phantoms of the dead or dying clothe themselves in a subtle aerial vapour in order to become visible to the eyes of the living. This applies to every sort of apparition, whether angels, spirits or demons. It is not, therefore, the phantom itself which is seen, but merely the subtle vapour or ghostly air which it has concentrated about itself. It may be that the fragrance of flowers and oils was used in earlier civilizations to make communication with ancestral spirits easier, by enabling them to show themselves in visible form. Smoke and perfumes served as vehicles for the temporary embodiment of demons which had been summoned up to visible appearance in the ceremonial magic of the Middle Ages.

An early Jewish treatise on magic (the *Pneumatica Kabbalistica*) alludes to 'Dwellers of the Lowest Air', as 'Spirits Proud and Wrathful, Authors of Arrogance and Fury, and the Seducers of Men'. These demons are said to require thicker and coarser odours and damp obnoxious vapours to make bodies in which the magician can see them.

An Egyptian myth is the basis of a more profound doctrine about air. The Egyptians believed that from the marriage of Chaos (matter before it was brought to life) and the Wind (the life-breath) came forth Mut or Mat in the form of an egg. Mat or Maat was the Egyptian word for both 'mother' and 'matter', and was also the name of the goddess of truth and justice.

The original egg – mother and matter, the womb in which the chick is hatched – later became the 0 or nought, which is the number of the first card in the Tarot pack. In early French packs this card is actually called *Le Mat*, the Fool.

The Fool is the first of the cards, the Origin from which all the others proceed. It stands for the Nothing before anything existed, which contained in itself the potential existence of everything; the ultimate Truth (the goddess Maat) behind all the surface phenomena of the universe. It is associated with air in the sense of a vacuum, an emptiness, and is identified with God as Pure Nothingness – having no identifiable characteristics but containing all things (see also TAROT).

The Sleeping Serpent

Breath or air as the creative spirit is also linked with the mind, the creator of ideas. In Hinduism, mind and breath (prana) are considered to be identical. Many forms of yoga involve *pranayama* (control of breathing) although far more is involved than the inhalation, retention and expiration of breath. The theory behind it is that when the process of breathing ceases to agitate the body and subsides, the mind attains absolute tranquility, freedom from thought, and the ultimate identity of itself with the object of meditation. The flow of breath having been controlled to the point where it ceases altogether, conception of mental images also ceases, and the mind becomes empty, merging into a formless radiance which is of the nature of pure bliss.

This doctrine was developed in its final and most perfect form in certain Hindu and Buddhist manuals, in which the whole of creation is regarded as illusory. Prana, the breath or life-current, is primarily used to compel the upward surge of *kundalini*, the great magical *shakti* or power residing in every individual (see KUNDALINI). She is visualized as a sleeping serpent coiled at the base of the spine. She is activated by a concentration of *citta* (mind-substance) set in motion by controlled breathing. The breath is thus a compulsive energy used to awaken the dormant cosmic power. This power is also likened to fire, fanned into activity by pranayama.

Magic powers accrue to the adept who stays the kundalini at any one of the six lotuses (*chakras*) situated at intervals along the spinal column. In the real adept, the true yogi, the fire is not arrested at any of these centres but is exalted to the highest lotus: the thousand-petalled lotus (*sahasrara*) in the region of the brain, where the goddess Kundalini unites with her lord, Shiva (pure consciousness). *Samadhi* (literally 'together with the lord') is the result.

When samadhi is stabilized and rendered permanent, it is known as liberation (*mukti*); it causes the yogi to become aware of his natural state. Liberation is not a state to be attained, for it is man's real nature. Attainment consists in removal of the ignorance which veils the true state.

There are several ways of raising kundalini. The use of breath forms the basis of *hatha yoga*, one of the major traditional forms of spiritual culture for realizing the union (*yoga*) of individual and absolute consciousness. *Ha* stands for the moon, *tha* for the sun. The solar and lunar currents circulating in the physical organism constitute the life-current (prana) which can be directed by breathing techniques. Breath and mind being one, the control of the one automatically effects the control of the other.

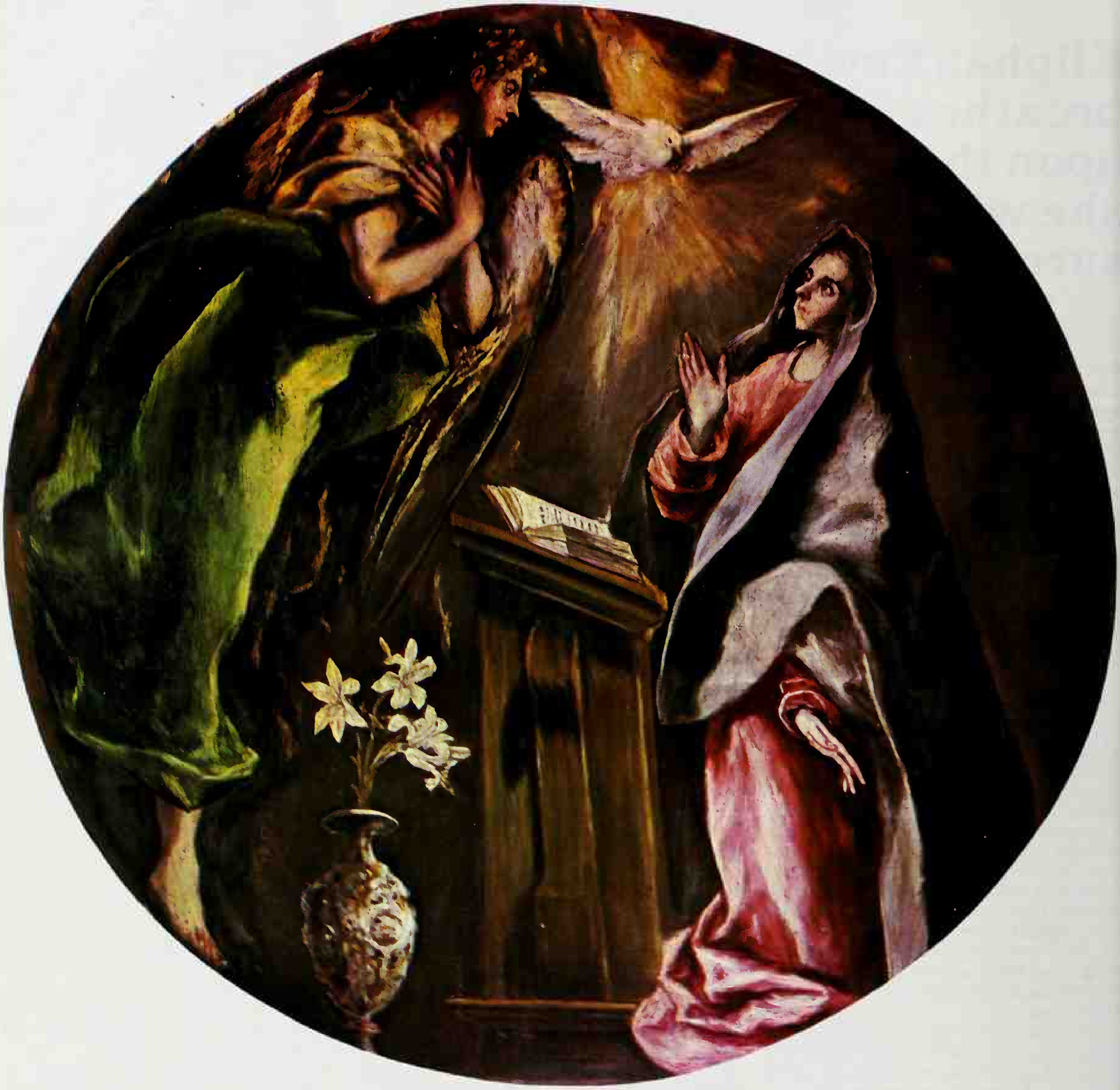
Mechanism of Desire

The prana is interrelated with sexual energy. Kundalini, the mystic fire, can also be expressed sexually. Mind and breath, united and rhythmically directed towards a given goal, is the basis of sexual magic. The magically-charged breath is supposed to have affinities with the mechanism of desire. According to Eliphas Levi, the 19th century occultist, if a man breathes in a certain way upon the back of a woman's neck she will automatically surrender to his will.

The ancient Hindu work *Yoga Vasishtha* contains a classic description of the awakening of the great magic power (shakti):

> When the *Kundalini* is filled with *prana* she darts upwards. She then becomes erect and stiff like a stick or an excited serpent. If the various physical orifices are then closed, the body is filled with *prana* and its physical and material components are fundamentally changed.

A western counterpart of the sun, moon, fire trinity is the caduceus of Hermes. This is the prototype of the magic wand used in ceremonial magic. It comprises the twin currents of moon and sun symbolized as serpents twined about a pole or wand which terminates in a winged and luminous bulb. The breath (or prana) represented by the serpents attains perfect equilibrium and transmits its influence to the wand, which



thus becomes potent to perform the will of the magician. The bulb of the wand, radiant with illumined will, is symbolical of that radiance with which the head-lotus (*sahasrara chakra*) is flooded when the risen goddess (Kundalini) unites with her lord: Shiva, the lord of Fire or Light.

Jumping like a Frog

The vagaries of kundalini when improperly or incompletely aroused have occasionally been recorded. One of the physical results of such a deviation is known as *buchari siddhi*, or 'the power of jumping like a frog'. This siddhi has been described by Aleister Crowley who observed it of his guru, Allan Bennett, one of the first to introduce Buddhism to England. One day, Bennett had been practising pranayama and his body had assumed the rigidity characteristic of certain trance conditions, causing it to jump about erratically. When it came to rest it resembled an overturned idol. He was completely oblivious that his body, galvanized by the interior power, had been rocked from its *asana* (meditation posture) and thrown about the room to land finally in a topsy-turvy attitude several yards distant from its original position.

Breath is life, in the sense that man cannot live without it. The Virgin Mary was impregnated by the Holy Spirit, often linked with the air that God blew into Adam's body to bring him to life. In El Greco's *Annunciation* the angel Gabriel, a winged being of the air, announces the event to Mary. The dove, another winged being of the air, is the symbol of the Holy Spirit

In the Tibetan Mystery Schools the breath plays a vital part in the process of death. The lama appointed to aid the dying makes sure that the prana is maintained in the sushumna (central canal) and not dissipated by re-entering the left or right nerve-currents. If consciousness is retained to the last, the breath or soul passes over consciously to the *bardo* (after-death plane or realm of the disembodied 'dead'). There it awaits rebirth in a form appropriate to its spiritual development. In this way, the breath, as the soul, survives the death of the physical organism (see also YOGA).

KENNETH GRANT

ST BRENDAN

THE IRISH ABBOT Brendan (c484—577) like other Celtic saints of the Dark Ages, is obscured as a human being by a cloud of legends. His chief legendary exploit was an Atlantic voyage in search of the Earthly Paradise or 'land promised to the saints'.

St Brendan, called 'the Navigator', is the patron of Kerry in south-west Ireland. His name is variously spelt. The mistaken form 'Brandan' is common, probably because of confusion with the mythical hero Bran, also a voyager (see BRAN). Brendan was born towards the close of the 5th century in or near Tralee. During a long life he founded monasteries at Ardfert in Kerry and at Clonfert in Galway. He undoubtedly went outside Ireland; his alleged visits to Wales and Brittany are quite credible and it is known that he met St Columba at Iona. St Brendan is commemorated in church dedications and place-names from Brittany to the Faroe Islands. The true extent of his travels is open to question but it appears that the legend of his voyage grew up around some venture which caused his absence from Ireland during the years of the 530s or 40s.

Faery Lands Forlorn

The legend is not an isolated fantasy. Its gradual growth, over three or four centuries, took place against a rich background of Irish seafaring, both real and imaginary. Early in the Christian era the Irish adopted the coracle or skin-boat from the Britons, and improved it into the efficient and seaworthy curragh, made by stretching greased waterproof hides over a wooden frame. The largest curraghs could hold a crew of a dozen or more, and make long journeys propelled by oar and sail, weathering storms by lying low in the waves.

Allusions to the voyage begin to appear in Irish writings in the early 9th century. We are told that Brendan 'sailed the sea', 'sought the Land of Promise', 'visited wonderful islands'. A sketch of the voyage is included in the *Life of St Machutus* (the Breton St Malo), written between 866 and 872. The two major versions, however, are in a *Life of St Brendan* dating from somewhere about 900, which is preserved in the medieval *Book of Lismore*, and the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, an account of the voyage alone, probably composed about 910-20.

The Friendly Whale

The main plot is fairly well defined. Brendan sails with a company of monks to look for a wonderful land in the western ocean which is regarded as a retreat, as an isle of the blest, and sometimes as the lost Earthly Paradise. He discovers a whole series of islands, witnesses many marvels, and celebrates Easter on the back of a whale. After years of peril on the high seas he attains his goal and returns home safely.

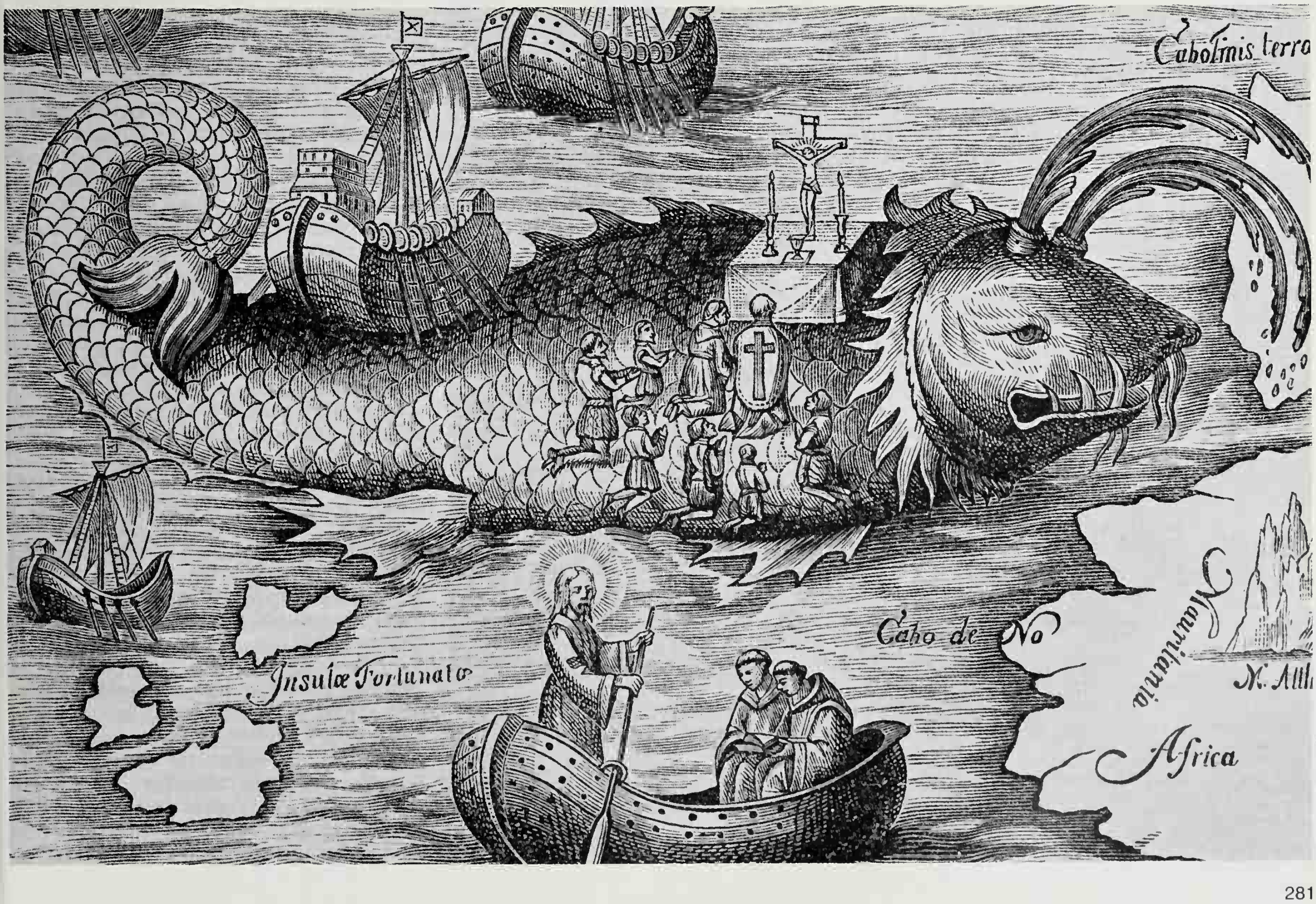
In its *Navigatio* form the story is as follows. St Brendan is visited at Ardfert by another monk named Barinthus, who has been to the 'land promised to the saints' over the western ocean, though he is uncertain of the route. Brendan decides to go in quest of it. Choosing 14 companions, he builds a great curragh, and sails from a creek near the foot of Brandon Mountain.

Veering winds bear the boat hundreds of miles off course to a steep rocky island with a single landing place. After a spell ashore, the monks go on to another island inhabited by large sheep and by a mysterious person called 'the procurator', who helps and advises them. Landing on what appears to be a nearby islet, they find they are on the back of a whale. Brendan afterwards tames the beast and induces it to help them. They cross a narrow sound to an island on the west of the Island of Sheep this is the Paradise of Birds.

In due course they go on to another island where the disciples of the Irish saint Ailbe live; to an island with a poisonous spring; to a region of calm where the sea is like a 'thick curdled mass'; to a very different stretch of sea, cold and stormy, where monsters threaten them; to a flat flowery island almost level with the waves; to an island with fragrant air, vividly green grass, and fruits described as huge grapes.

They pass a translucent sea where they can watch the fishes far below, and, on another day, a vast crystal column among the waves. From here they sail north to a

From a map of Brendan's voyage, the amiable whale on which the saint and his companions landed, mistaking it for a small island



Mary Evans Picture Library

rugged island covered with slag, where giants are working at a colossal smithy, surrounded by fire and fumes. After this comes a remote northern mountain with black cliffs and smoke pouring from the summit, and then, far to the south of it, a precipitous islet with an Irish hermit living in a cave near the top.

Most of these adventures have fairy-tale elements, yet there are many strangely exact statements of compass bearing and distance, the latter expressed in the Norse manner as 'so many days' sail'. Brendan does not touch on all the islands in one impossible tour, but in a series of forays, returning periodically to the Island of Sheep as a base. His final, successful expedition from there takes 40 days. He passes through a thick fog into light, and at last beholds the promised land. It is sunny and fruitful. The explorers traverse it for weeks without coming to a farther shore. A man whom they meet on a river bank tells them to turn back: some day God will restore this lost Paradise to all Christian men, but in the meantime it must stay hidden, or known only to a few as a haven from persecution. So the monks leave, and reach Erin again without mishap.

Based on a Map

How should the *Navigatio* be construed? In some sections at least, the author is undoubtedly giving glimpses of actual places, seen through a haze of folklore or poetic imagery. Thus the northern island of giant smiths is generally acknowledged to be Iceland. The smithy is a volcano, perhaps Hekla, to which the author has transferred a standard classical myth about Etna and its Cyclopean forge, found in Virgil and Aeschylus. Again, the Island of Sheep is almost certainly Stromo in the Faroes. The name 'Faroes' is derived from a Danish word for sheep, and the animals, said to have been imported by the first Irish settlers, are a staple of the economy. The Paradise of Birds is Vagar, across the sound west of Stromo. Both sheep and birds are mentioned in a description of the Faroes by the Irish geographer Dicuil, written in 825.

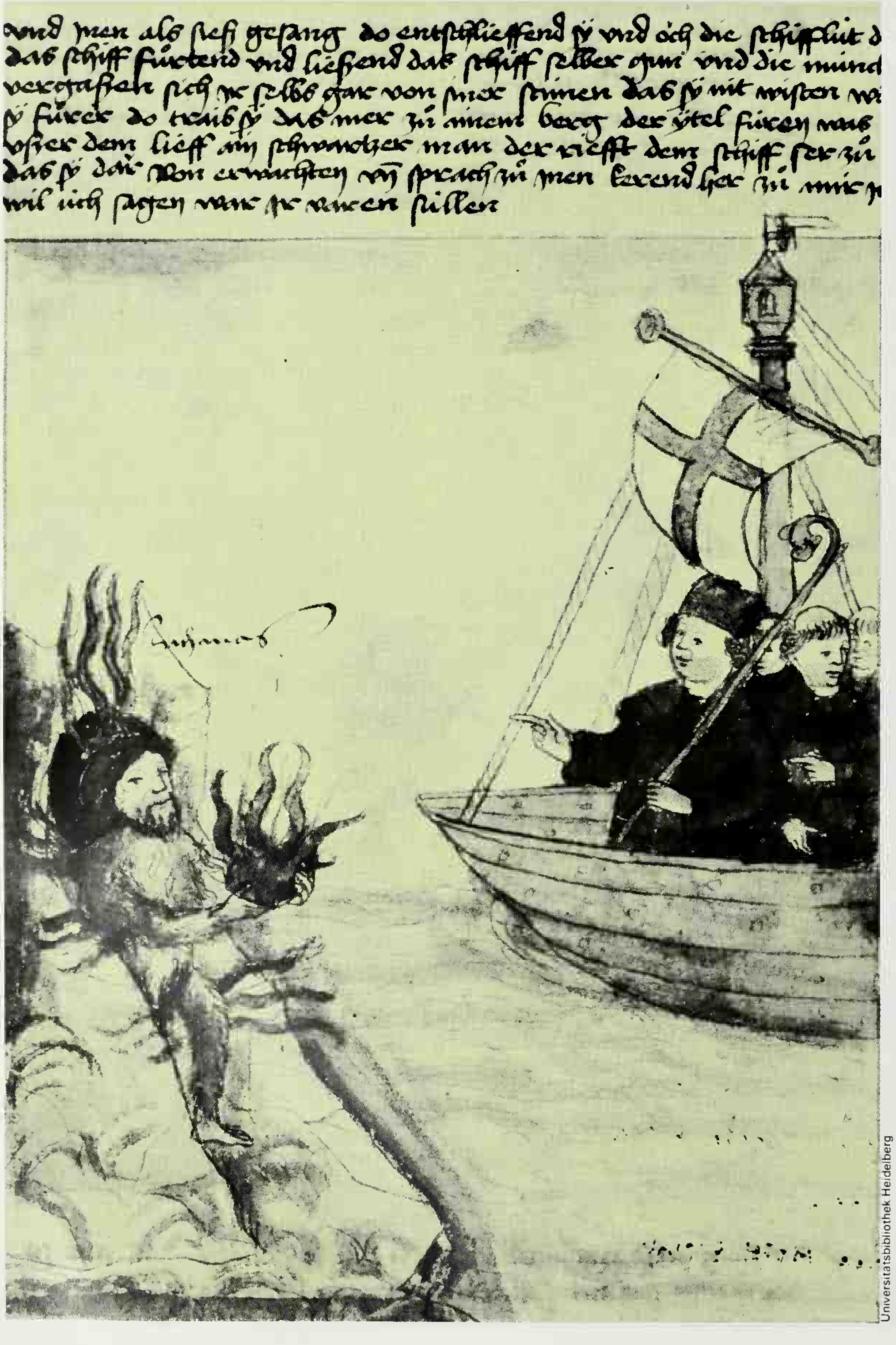
Other clues are less clear, but they are plentiful, and, when taken together, forceful. Granted that the *Navigatio* is fiction woven round a popular hero, to that extent resembling a romance like the *Mael Duin*; nevertheless, it appears, as *Mael Duin* emphatically does not, to be based on a map or something like one. As to the extent of this map, opinions differ. But a survey of writers who have studied the legend shows that there are arguments for including not only the Faroes and Iceland, but also St Kilda, Rockall, Jan Mayen, Greenland, the Newfoundland Banks and iceberg zone, Madeira, the Azores, the Sargasso Sea, and parts of the West Indies, the Bahamas and mainland America.

Whatever geography the *Navigatio* contains is lost to sight in the later romantic adaptations, where the whole story is jumbled and made more fantastic. Brendan's fame spread through medieval Europe, but no idea of a map went with it. The sole persistent belief was that the saint discovered one otherwise unknown island in the western ocean – a warm, supremely fertile place. 'St Brendan's Isle' was not thought of as the Earthly Paradise (which medieval Christians pictured in Asia, and could not take seriously anywhere else), but as something more like the island of giant grapes supposed to have been visited during the epic voyage.

Columbus himself is said to have made inquiries in Galway where Brendan finally settled, and to have taken a Galway seaman on his first voyage. His son testifies to the effect the legend had on him. Later, in fact, Columbus argued that Paradise was to be found up the Orinoco river, having reached its approaches, like Brendan before him, by sailing westward.

GEOFFREY ASHE

FURTHER READING: Geoffrey Ashe, *Land to the West: St. Brendan's Voyage to America* (Viking Press, 1962); Tim Severin, *Brendan Voyage* (McGraw-Hill, 1978); George A. Little, *Brendan the Navigator* (Gill & Son, Dublin, 1945).



Universitatsbibliothek Heidelberg

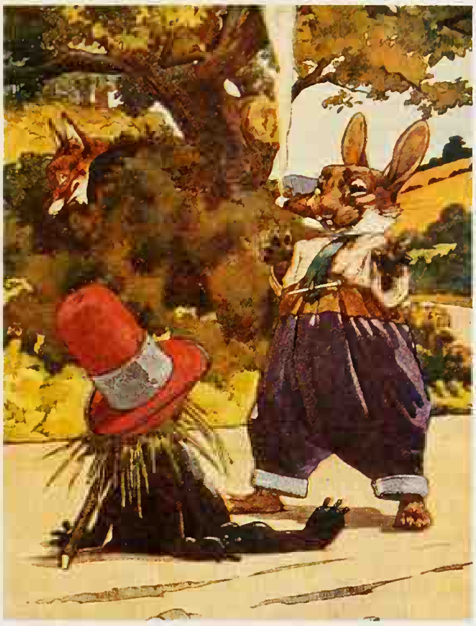
Irish monks like St Brendan were using coracles from the 5th century onward to venture farther and farther. Their main purpose was sea-pilgrimage, the search for a 'desert in the ocean', where they could live in peace and penitential remoteness from society. St Brendan's voyage may have unknowingly taken him to America centuries before Columbus

BRER RABBIT

A CREATION of the African-American tradition, Brer Rabbit is one of the most memorable characters in folklore, and certainly the most important figure to have emerged from the folklore of all the immigrants to North America. The stories that describe his exploits can be characterised as modern myths, in that they describe a situation – and how it can be dealt with – obliquely but with great force.

The Brer Rabbit stories were part of the collection of African-American tales collected by white journalist Joel Chandler Harris and published in 1880. He wrote them in an attempted black dialect, as told to children by an old man, 'Uncle Remus'. The stories are sufficiently powerful and straightforward to work as children's stories, but there is far more to them than merely an interesting narrative. There are various characters – Brer Fox (whom the rabbit usually outwits) and Brer Bear, for example – but the key figure is the rabbit, who represents an archetype found in many other cultures.

This archetype is often known as the Trickster (see TRICKSTER), and examples can be found throughout the world – there are many Native American myths, for example, that feature such a being in the form of a coyote, and also a hare. In China, the monkey plays this role – and in African-American culture, a monkey, the so-called 'signifying monkey', was also prominent in 19th-century tales.



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'Mawnin'! sez Brer Rabbit, sezee – nice wedder dis mawnin', sezee,' encountering the Tar-baby set in the road by Brer Fox. *The Wonderful Tar-baby Story* is perhaps the most powerful of the Brer Rabbit stories: illustration from a 1908 edition by Harry Rowntree

In Africa, the hare was a very common trickster figure, and it is thought that this is the basis of the character of Brer Rabbit, although it is difficult to trace a direct influence – it is, in fact, easier to trace the influence of the west African spider trickster Anansi who has descended into Caribbean folklore under the name 'Aunt Nancy'.

The reason that Brer Rabbit is such a strong character is that he represents one of the methods that 19th-century African-Americans had of dealing with the predicament of being an oppressed people with no political escape from the oppression of an overwhelmingly racist white society. The oppressor could not be defeated by strength or power: even where the black was of superhuman strength the result could only be tragedy, as a parallel myth, that of John Henry, expressed clearly. The only way to turn the tables, even for a short time, was to to use cunning, or 'signifying', to find a way through: this Brer Rabbit does with great aplomb.

Perhaps the most powerful of the Brer Rabbit stories is that of the tar-baby – a very obvious symbol of blackness. Brer Rabbit is first of all enraged at the tar-baby and attacks it. The more he tries to fight and then escape, however, the more enmeshed he becomes. There is no way out, and he is terribly vulnerable to the fox. But he uses his cunning – the only weapon he has – to persuade the fox to throw him, and the tar-baby, into the briar patch, where he is safe. The moral is clear: struggling with your fate, denying your very nature, will be valueless. But clear thinking and cunning may save your skin.

BRIGIT

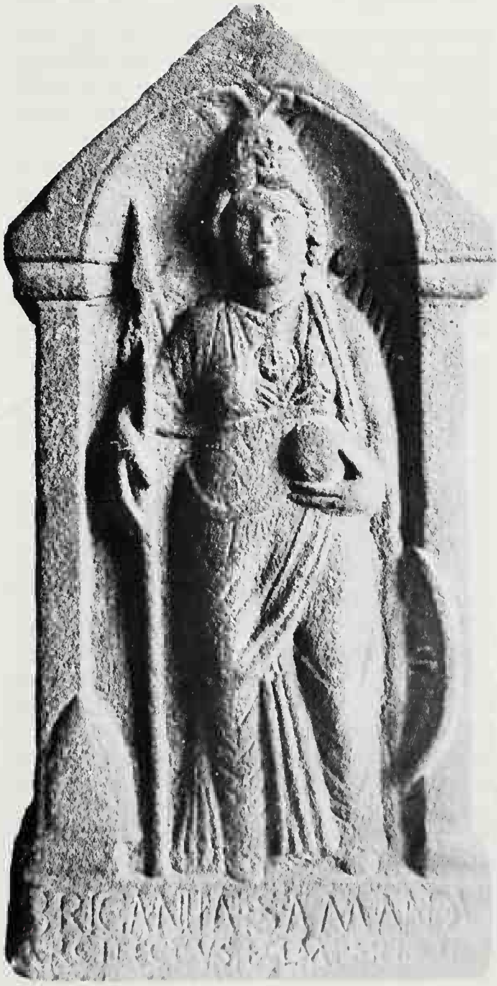
BRIGIT WAS the daughter of the powerful tribal god, the Dagda, according to early Irish literary tales. Her name, meaning 'the Powerful One' or 'Queen', links her with the North British Brigantia 'the High One', with whom she may originally have been identical. Brigantia was goddess of the Celtic tribe of the Brigantes, who occupied what are now roughly the six northern counties of England. Dedications to this deity have also been discovered in sites on the European continent, and it seems probable that her spheres of influence must have been closely similar to those of her Irish counterpart.

The evidence suggests that the two goddesses are in fact fundamentally the same deity, but venerated according to local preferences and requirements in different Celtic regions. In Brigit and Brigantia we are dealing with powerful pagan Celtic religious ideas: the influence of these deities was widespread in Celtic areas, and their cult enduring. In British art Brigantia is associated with Minerva (see ATHENE). Caesar, in his observations about certain Celtic divinities, remarks: 'About these gods they hold nearly the same views as other people do. . .that Minerva first instituted the arts and crafts.'

Brigit of Ireland is essentially a patroness of craftsmen and their crafts. Brigantia is not only likened to Minerva but figures also in Roman times as a nymph goddess, who presided over springs to which healing powers were probably attributed. Brigit was similarly concerned with medicine and healing of all kinds, and many wells with a reputation for a variety of virtues were named after her successor in Christian times, St Brigit of Kildare. It therefore seems very probable that Brigantia of North Britain and Brigit of pagan Ireland shared the same origins.

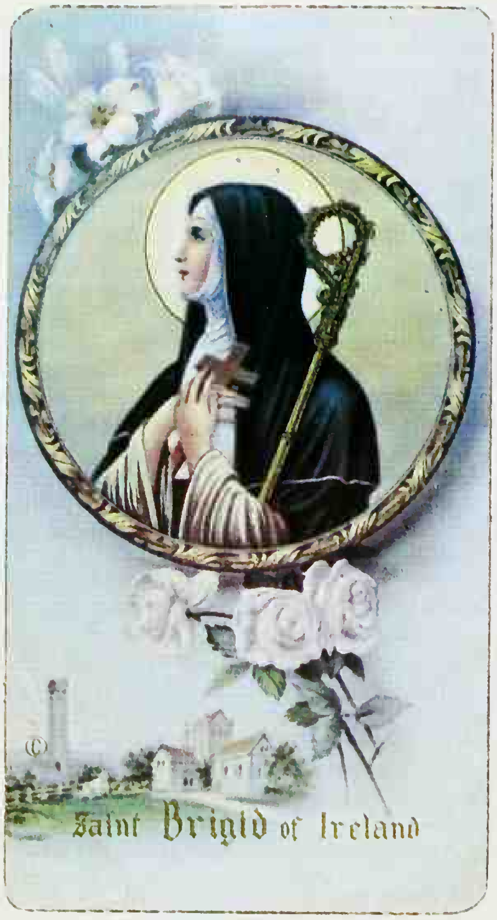
Brigit also shows a close affinity with certain Celtic goddesses portrayed in groups of three in the art of Roman Gaul and Britain. She figures in Irish traditions as one of three sisters all named Brigit. It is almost certain that this is a purely literary attempt to explain the pagan Celtic idea of a single god or goddess depicted in triple form in order to emphasize his or her divine powers. This threefold character would then link Brigit with the portrayals of the triple goddesses of Gaul and Britain; these mother goddesses were worshipped in the Roman Empire by men of all nations. The Celts regarded the number three as being especially magical and powerful, and for this reason they often gave their deities attributes or characteristics with this number, such as three heads.

Brigit of Ireland is also deeply concerned



National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh

Roman statue of Brigantia, the northern English equivalent of the Irish goddess, Brigit. She holds the spear of the Roman Minerva and the globe of rulership, with wings of victory sprouting from her shoulders: 3rd century AD. from Birrens, Dumfriesshire



Known as St Brigid in Ireland, the pagan goddess in her Christian form. but still associated with fertility, child-birth and healing

with fertility and childbirth and this further links her with the groups of three mother-goddesses with their symbols of plenty and maternity. In the literature of early Ireland, Brigit was the goddess of poetry and wisdom. One of her sisters (or other manifestations of herself) was the patron goddess of medicine; the third Brigit was responsible for the well-being of the smiths.

It is probable that the old calendar festival of Imbolc (1 February), which seemingly celebrated the start of the milk season of the ewes, was connected with rites in honour of Brigit. This would emphasize her concern with fertility, both human and animal. Imbolc corresponds to the feast of St Brigit in the Christian calendar.

The widespread and popular cult of the pagan goddess Brigit was replaced in Christian times by the cult of the saint, doubtless identical with the goddess in more than name. The worship of this Christian Brigit, with her curative and fertility associations, was as widespread and persistent as would be expected in the light of the earlier cult.

Brigit of Kildare was the first Christian of this name to be recorded. At Kildare a sacred fire was kept permanently burning, tended by 19 nuns in turn, and by St Brigit herself on the 20th day. No male was ever allowed to come near it or to breathe upon it. This suggests that we are dealing with a survival in a Christian context of a pagan cult exclusive to women such as we know to have existed in Celtic Europe.

Midwife to the Virgin

Like her pagan predecessor, St Brigit was widely invoked and loved. She too was especially associated with fertility and childbirth – dedications to her are numerous in the Celtic-speaking regions of the British Isles. Her cult has persisted down to modern times. In the Catholic islands of western Scotland she was traditionally known as the Virgin Mary's midwife; in this role she achieved a popularity superior even to that of the Virgin Mary herself. She was credited with many miracles and indeed was referred to as 'the Mary of the Gaels'. Brigit was invoked by women in labour and by the midwife before delivery began – practices which carry back down the centuries to the pagan goddess conferring ease of birth and prosperous fertility.

La Feill Bhride (1 February), her feast day, was attended by tremendous local celebrations and elaborate ritual which had to be carried out correctly if St Brigit was to be pleased and generous. She was the symbol of the stirring of life again after the dead months of winter. Her pagan origins are shown by the fact that, if she were thought to be displeased, a sacrifice of a clearly non-Christian nature was made to her. A cockerel was buried alive near the point where three streams met, reflecting perhaps her ancient threefold character. Incense was then burned on the hearth of the family concerned.

FURTHER READING: A. Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1968).

BRITTANY

BRITTANY FORMS PART of the area of western France also known as Armorica. Her people are Celts and have close affinities with other Celtic people such as the Welsh,the Cornish and the Irish. Nearly a million Frenchmen still speak the Celtic language Breton or *brezhoneg*, from which Welsh and Gaelic are descended.

Brittany was peopled in distant times by a race who have left huge stone monuments, tombs and circles of stone. The Gauls who occupied the area during the Roman Empire were driven out by a mass migration from Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries, at the decline of the Empire. The invaders from the British Isles gave their newly gained territory the name of their homeland – hence the name Brittany.

The Bridge of the Secret

The Bretons played an important part in the formation and spread of the Arthurian legends (see ARTHUR). Their travelling entertainers had a high reputation in the Middle Ages; the poetess Marie de France, who borrowed from them the themes of her lays, wrote in the 12th century: 'Brittany is poetry'. Many heroes of the stories of the Round Table were Bretons. Lancelot of the Lake, who was brought up by the fairy Vivien, spent his childhood in the forest of Broceliande near Paimpont which still exists today. He took his name from the nearby lake where the fairy had her palace. The Bridge of the Secret, where Lancelot and Queen Guinevere pledged their love, can also still be seen there. (See also LANCELOT.)

In the same forest is the Fountain of Youth, whose waters are believed to have powers of rejuvenation, and the Fountain of Barenton, sacred to the Druids and still the symbol of Celtic poetry. It was there that Merlin the Wizard met Vivien and fell in love with her. The Garden of Joy, not far away, was their trysting-place. The water of Barenton also possesses allegedly miraculous powers: when it is poured on the Stone of Merlin nearby it lets loose storms and causes other natural phenomena. At one time the population of the neighbouring town of Concoret (Morbihan) used to go there in procession and the priest would dip the foot of the cross in the spring, to bring rain in dry years.

It was also in Brittany that part of the story of Tristan took place (see TRISTAN). The hero's uncle, King Mark of Cornwall, took his name from that of an ancient Celtic horse god (horse in Breton is *marc'h*). Strange legends are still current about Mark in the region of Douarnenez and in Penmarc'h (which means 'the horse's head'). Tristan of Leon after his love affair with Mark's wife, the Irish Isolde, retired to Brittany. There he married another Isolde, the daughter of the king of Carhaix in Finistère. When mortally wounded, he asked to be taken to await the boat which was bringing his first love back to him, it was to the headland of Penmarc'h that he was taken; it was there that the two lovers died, facing the sea which unites all Celts.

The Scythe of Ankou

For the past 150 years, scholars of folklore have been collecting a rich store of folktales, stories and narrative songs of a remarkable diversity. The major theme which constantly recurs is that of death and the afterlife. It is a theme which permeates the peninsula completely. A seemingly divine person known as Ankou is at one and the same time the provider and the master. Awe-inspiring, omnipotent Ankou is the true ruler of the world. In popular imagination he appears to be supreme, since everyone eventually obeys him: the Virgin Mary and even Jesus Christ himself have submitted to him.

Ankou has various guises. Each parish has its own version, which changes moreover, because the last person to die in the year has to play the role of Ankou during the whole of the following year. He is represented as a skeleton, or as a man without a nose and with empty eye-sockets. He often has a hat with a wide brim which hides his face and prevents people from recognizing him at first. In pictures he usually carries a scythe handled the wrong way up. Ankou uses it to kill those people he has marked out, but instead of using it in the normal way of reapers, he throws it in front of him, cutting edge first.

Ankou, Reaper of Death

He is tall and of a fearsome thinness – sometimes a skeleton wrapped in a shroud. He is whitehaired, his locks falling over his shoulders, and wears a flat broad-brimmed hat of the type still popular in the remoter parts of the country. . .Still he makes his nightly journeys, reaping his rich harvest of human lives. Often he is represented as carrying upon his shoulder a scythe which is sharpened with a human bone, sometimes a sword, sometimes as at La Roche-Maurice a lance, and sometimes as at Noyal-Pontivy a club. And because of the long journeys he must take, he is provided with a cart, covered in a shroud, the axles of which may be heard creaking on dark nights. Well may they creak, for never a spot of grease do they see, so incessantly is the cart in use. This cart is drawn by a team which varies according to the district in which it finds itself; in the Morbihan by two oxen and a lean horse, in Finistere and the Cotes-du-Nord by two and occasionally by three horses one behind the other, the shaft-horse sleek and well-fed, the others little more than skeletons.

If the Ankou journeys alone he walks beside his horses; but if he takes with him his servants he stands in the cart using his scythe to right and left with terrible effect while they, skeleton forms like their master, wearing the same flat Breton hat, and dressed in black, lead the team and pile the bodies of the dead into the cart. And of those who die upon the night of St Sylvester it is said that they must draw of their own strength the cart of the Ankou instead of resting in it on the journey to their Maker.

W. Branch Johnson
Folktales of Brittany

Another aspect of death is represented by the world of Anaon. This word describes both the sinners who have not yet been freed of their ties with life here on earth similar to the Catholic souls in purgatory, and the spirit who presides over their domain. The land of Anaon corresponds to the pagan hell, where cold reigns instead of fire, as in medieval Christian tradition. Dwellers in Anaon communicate with the living who can not only help Anaon, but also fight against him. Certain rites can permit a soul to be rescued from this frozen torment: a Mass or a series of Masses, special pilgrimages, or appropriate exorcisms.

Signs of Anaon are found everywhere as his land overlaps that of the living in some ways; it includes, for example, some place in the countryside where a dead person lived sinfully. There are also territories on earth which belong to Anaon. These are very old sacred places, dedicated since prehistory to the gods of death and the afterlife. The sinners, often drowned sailors, gather at the approaches to Pointe du Raz and the Ile de Sein.

The kingdom of Anaon, known as the Marsh of Hells (*Yeun Ellez*) is situated in the Armorican peninsula, between Brasparts and La Feuillée. Bounded on three sides by wild hills, where sandstone juts from the heath in sharp spines, it was thought to be the door to the underworld. It is here that the living come to rid themselves of troublesome ghosts. For an exorcism of this sort, it was necessary to have the help of a priest well-versed in this kind of service. Dressed in his surplice and holding his stole in his hand, he went to the haunted place. There he took off his shoes to become, according to the ritual, *beleg betek an douar*, 'priest to the earth'.

A bitter struggle followed which could last for hours, even days, during which the exorcist would attempt to put his stole on the ghost's neck. When he had succeeded in doing this and had pronounced the magic words, the dead person was transformed into a black dog. A man was then chosen by the priest to take the animal, following a prescribed route, from presbytery to presbytery, to the boundary of Yeun Ellez. Then the priest of one of the nearby parishes led the sinister animal to the marsh. Barefoot, he led it to Youdig, where hell opens its gates, and made it disappear for ever.

The Well of the Sea

There are innumerable legends and customs attached to the stone formations of Brittany. Traditionally, the upright standing stones are believed to be human beings who have been petrified as punishment or as an act of vengeance. The region is particularly rich in megaliths and other stone monuments, which still exist beside the Christian crosses which were erected many centuries later. The megaliths of Saint-Just and those on the peninsula of Crozon form a chequer pattern .

The most impressive monuments stand in rows. Those at Carnac consist of some 3000 upright stones side by side, with a considerable number of dolmens (stone tombs), stone circles and burial mounds enclosing masonry. According to tradition, they were once an army before being transformed into rock by St Cornely to stop them pursuing him. The legend surrounding the stones of Plouhinec is that they hide treasures which can be seen once a year, when the stones go to drink at the River Etel. The curious onlooker, however, runs the risk of being crushed to death by the stones rushing back. The monument of Kerloas in Plouarzel has two projections: one is believed to confer male children on the man who rubs himself on it; while the other gives power over her husband to the woman who does similarly.

Other stones are legendarily connected with water. The standing stone of the Ile d'Un, on the Grand-Lieu Lake, together with the stone of Saint-Samson on the bank of the River Rance, are the bungs which hold back underground waters and prevent a flood. Sometimes, indeed, it was believed that the waters broke loose and destroyed whole cities; Brittany has many of these submerged cities. The Grand-Lieu lake covers one: there are also Etier de Langon, the bay of Mont-Saint-Michel, that of St Brieuc close to Erquy and above all that of Douarnenez under whose waters reposes the famous Ville d'Ys. The destruction of this town is sometimes attributed by legend to the sudden opening of the Well of the Sea, releasing underground waters, rather than to the natural encroachment of the sea over the coast. It is believed that the person responsible for this catastrophe was the Princess Ahes or Dahud, who took the keys to the well from her sleeping father at the request of her lover, the Devil. She was an ancient Armorican goddess of water. The sacred springs are reputed to cure a wide variety of afflictions, including eye troubles, infectious illnesses, chest complaints, fevers, rheumatism and toothache. They also have powers of divination. The garment of a sick child, placed on the surface of the water, is said to tell the outcome of his illness. If it floats, he will recover, but if it sinks, he will die. Offerings are made to encourage a favourable prognostication; they usually take the form of coins, nails or pins which are thrown into the spring.

Christian and Pagan

The guardian saints of Brittany are a curious collection, numbering over 500 in all. Some are minor local gods or early Breton chiefs. Some, who have lasted for centuries and are still acknowledged, are barely tolerated by the Roman Catholic Church. The most illustrious are the Seven Saints, who created the seven bishoprics of Brittany.

St Anne, the patroness of Brittany, is traditionally called *mamm goz ar Vretoned*, the grandmother or ancient mother of the Bretons. She has the same name as a Celtic goddess, Ana, thought by the ancient Irish to be the mother of gods; a fact which probably accounts for the high honour in which she is held. A legend established around the very ancient sanctuary of Ste-Anna-la-Palud has it that St Anne may have been a Breton, coming from the same part of the country as the submerged Ville d'Ys. She was married in Judaea and after the death of her husband returned to Armorica, where Jesus came to visit her. This is obviously a memory of the earlier, native Anne, later taken over by the Christian Church. The religious history of Brittany, in fact, shows a constant struggle between the old religion and the new. In the 17th century, the power of the Church was at such a low ebb that it was necessary to organize missions to revive it. Paganism ruled, especially in the interior of the peninsula, and many priests themselves shared their services between the two forms of worship.

G.LE SCOUEZEC

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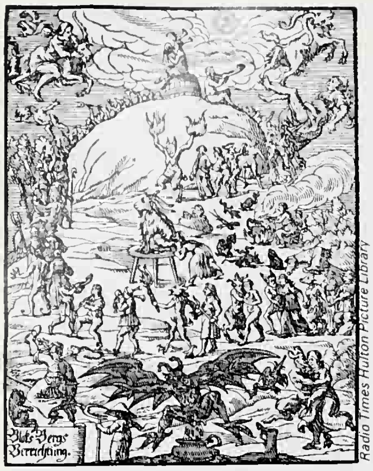

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Brocken

Highest peak of the Harz Mountains in Saxony, long famous as the place where witches held their revels on Walpurgis Night, the eve of 1 May; scene of the witches' sabbath in Goethe's *Faust:* the Brocken Bow or Brocken Spectre is the giant shadow cast on clouds or fog below him by someone standing on a hilltop, so named because the phenomenon is supposed to occur frequently on the Brocken.

See GERMAN WITCHCRAFT

Witches were believed to travel on eggshells, bunches of straw and even wisps of grass. The broomstick, however, is the vehicle popularly associated with the witch – oddly, since it is also the emblem of the virtuous housewife

BROOMSTICK

THE HUMBLE BROOMSTICK has played an intriguing part in the social, sexual and psychic life of mankind. In popular belief witches invariably fly through the air on broomsticks, though in fact the number of witches who confessed to doing so is remarkably small.

Brooms were originally made of a stalk of the broom plant with a bunch of leaves at the head. As an indoor, domestic implement, the broom became a symbol of woman. The equivalent symbol for man is the pitchfork, and in many medieval pictures of witches' gatherings the women hold brooms and the men or the devils hold pitchforks. In some parts of England until quite recently a woman would prop up a broom outside her door when she went out, or she might push the broom up the chimney with its end sticking out at the top, as a sign that she was out.

But perhaps originally her purpose was to guard her home by being symbolically present there in the form of the broom, for the 17th century Scottish witch Isabel Gowdie (see GOWDIE) said that before leaving to go to the witches' sabbath, a woman would put her broom on the bed to deceive her husband. The witch would say, 'I lay down this besom in the Devil's name; let it not stir till I come again.'

In the Middle Ages it was believed that witches travelled on an infinite variety of flying objects, including animals, hobby horses, shovels, eggshells, bunches of straw and wisps of grass, or without any visible means of support at all. A forked stick was a particularly popular witch-vehicle.

She Ambled and Galloped

A famous Irish witch of the early 14th century, Alice Kyteler , was said to own a staff 'on which she ambled and galloped through thick and thin, when and in what manner she listed, after having greased it with the ointment which was found in her possession.' There is no clear indication here of flying through the air, though the mention of the ointment suggests it. According to an anonymous tract from Savoy, *Errores Gazariorum* written c1450, a stick anointed with flying ointment was presented to every witch on her initiation. The earliest known case of a witch confessing to flying on a broom was in 1453, when Guillaume Edelin of St Germain-en-Laye, near Paris, stated that he had done so. A witch of Savoy, tried in 1477, said that the Devil gave her a stick 18 inches long and a jar of ointment. She would grease the stick and, putting it between her legs, say 'Go in the Devil's name, go!': and at once she was carried through the air to the sabbath.

A hundred years later, in 1563, Martin Tulouff of Guernsey said that he saw his aged mother straddle a broomstick and whisk up the chimney and out of the house on it, saying as she went, 'Go in the name of the Devil and Lucifer over rocks and thorns.' In 1598 Claudine Boban and her mother, witches of the province of Franche-Comté in eastern France, also spoke of flying up the chimney on a stick. The belief that witches usually left their houses by way of the chimney became firmly embedded in popular tradition, in spite of the rarity with which it appears in witches' own confessions: there may be some connection with the custom, mentioned earlier, of pushing a broom up the chimney to indicate the housewife's absence.

The lawyer and witch-hunter Jean Bodin, in his *Démonomanie* of 1580, maintained that witches flew on either a broom or a black ram but that it was only the woman's spirit that flew through the air, while her body remained at home to perplex investigators. There is evidence that the 'flying' of witches was a dream or hallucinatory experience, and most witches said that they went to their meetings in the ordinary way, on foot or on horseback. It is also possible that the belief that witches flew on broomsticks was partly based on the fact that

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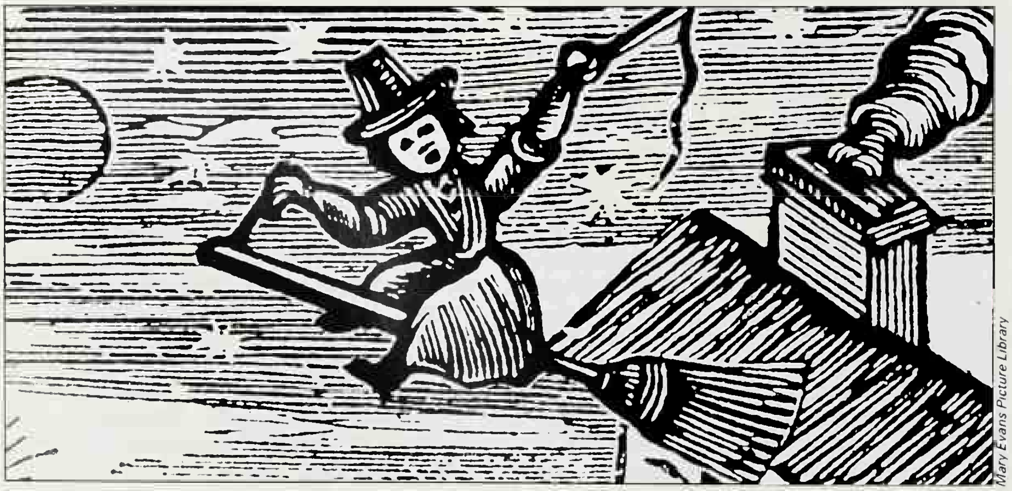

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Broomsticks are popularly associated with witches. *Above* A modern witch with broomstick and black cat, and *left* her traditional predecessor, flying to the witches' meeting on her broom. The belief that witches flew on broomsticks was probably partly based on the fact that they frequently used them in ritual dances

they danced with a stick between their legs, jumping high in the air. This may explain the curious statement of a Somerset woman named Julian Cox at her trial in 1664, that 'one evening she walked out about a mile from her own house, and there came riding towards her three persons upon three broomsticks, born up about a yard and a half from the ground.' Two of the three persons she knew, the third 'came in the shape of a black man'.

Freedom of the Air

An effective form of defence against aerial witches was considered to be a peal of church bells. Stronger methods were sometimes used: in Slav countries people used to fire muskets at the clouds, screaming as they did so, 'Curse, curse Herodius, thy mother is a heathen damned of God', while others bestrewed the ground with scythes and billhooks, edge upwards to ensure that there should be no soft landing for the witches.

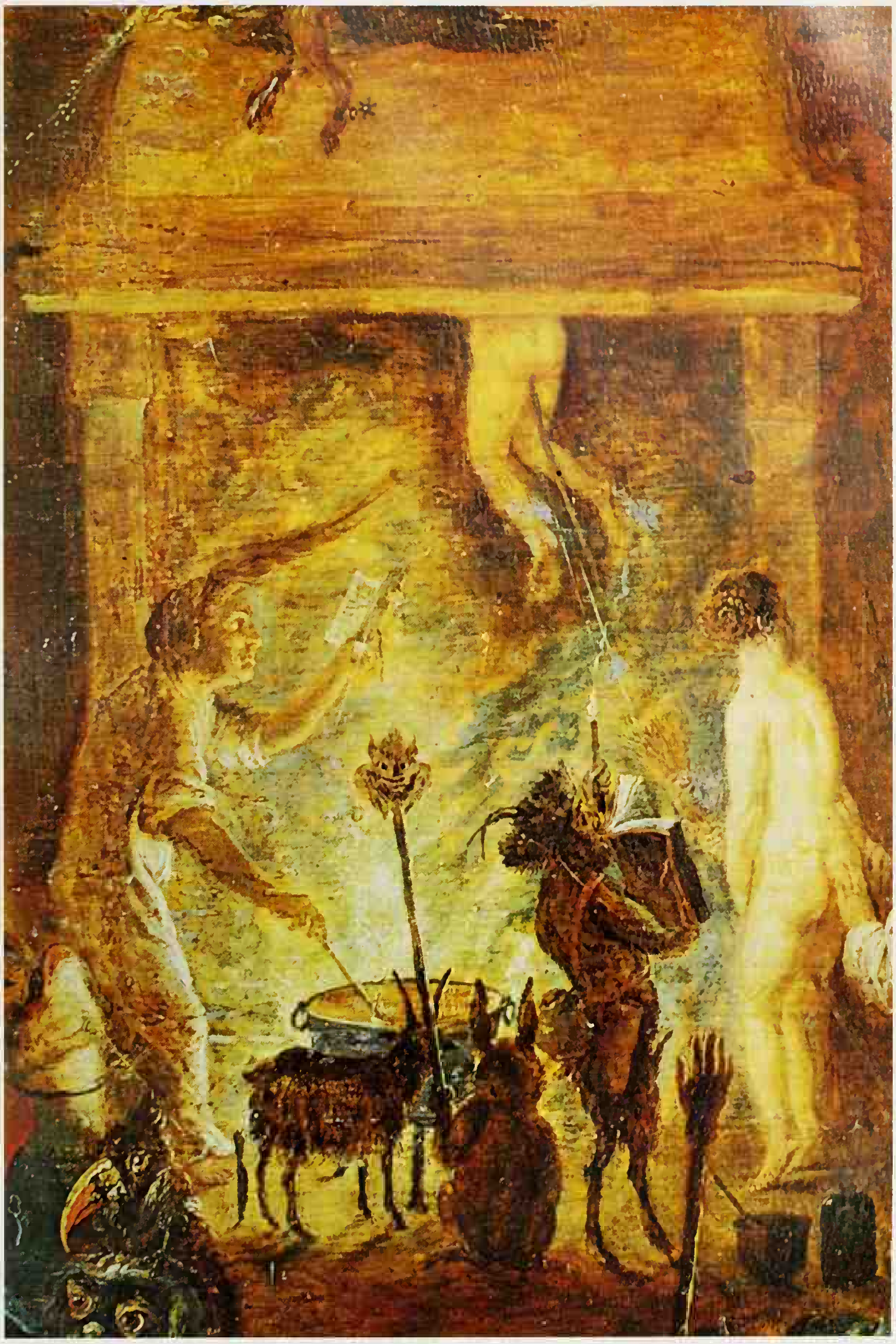
Towards the end of the 18th century the whole question of the flying of witches was thrashed out in an English court of law. The judge, Lord Mansfield, delivered his famous judgement: that he knew of no law of England that prohibited flying and that, as far as he was concerned, anyone so inclined was perfectly free to do so. It remains a mystery, therefore, why from the moment of its sanction by British law, flying by British witches appears to have stopped almost immediately, except for isolated reports of East Anglian witches skimming church spires on flying hurdles throughout the next 50 years.

Broomstick Wedding

Once grounded, the broomstick survived only as one of the props in the Mummers' play, in the now extinct broomstick dance of the Fen country, and in the long discarded comic dance of the weird sisters in Macbeth. Its eclipse appears so complete that only 150 years ago Collin de Plancy wrote in his *Dictionary of Demonology*: 'The idiots who imagined that sorcerers and demons celebrated the Sabbath also argued that witches travelled to the Sabbath on broomsticks. Nowadays everyone knows there are no sorcerers and no one rides on broomsticks.'

A rite which survived, however, in Wales and among gypsies, was the old custom of the broomstick wedding. The happy couple solemnized their union by leaping from the street into their new home over a broom placed in the doorway. This had to be done before witnesses and without dislodging the broom. At any time within a year the marriage could be dissolved by reversing the process, the couple jumping backwards out of the house over the broom, again before witnesses and without touching the broom.

For a single girl to step over a broomstick, however, was a most unfortunate omen, for it meant that she would be a mother before she became a wife. Lighthearted wags used to delight in putting broomsticks in the paths of unsuspecting virgins. It was also very unlucky to make a broom in May, by long tradition an antifertility month and unsuitable for weddings, or during the 12 days of Christmas. It was disastrous to sweep dust out of the front door, which meant dispersing all the luck of the house. On the other hand, in India, a sweeper's broom is still often tied to the mast of a ship, as a charm to 'sweep' storms away. In recent years the witch's broomstick has regained significance with the revival of witchcraft itself. The ritual importance of 'wand, riding-pole or broomstick' is stressed in the manuals of the modern witch covens. Man, it seems, finds it impossible to escape from the dreams of his childhood, perhaps influenced by the nursery rhyme of the old woman who ascended in a basket to brush the cobwebs from the clouds with her broom. But it is still surprising that an object specifically designed for sweeping the floor should also be in fantasy a vehicle on which to swoop through the skies.



Giraudon

A few witches confessed to leaving their houses by way of the chimney, mounted on a broomstick, and it quickly became part of the traditional popular beliefs about witches: detail from David Tenier's *Scène de Sorcière*

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Burned at the stake as a heretic, Giordano Bruno was one of the most original thinkers of his time

GIORDANO BRUNO

A PHILOSOPHER AND MATHEMATICIAN, Giordano Bruno was born in 1548 in the little Italian town of Nola near Naples. A lifetime of enforced wandering through Europe, during which he formulated revolutionary ideas concerning the workings of the universe, resulted in hostile accusations by the Church at Rome. He was prosecuted and imprisoned by the Inquisition in 1592, and in 1600 was burned at the stake.

At the age of 17, Bruno had entered the principal Dominican monastery in Naples. Here he soon became acquainted with the writings of classical authors such as Aristotle, Virgil and Plato. He undoubtedly read and questioned the works of Ptolemy, the Alexandrian astronomer, whose geocentric theory of planetary movement, explaining the earth to be the immovable centre of the universe, had been accepted for over 1300 years. Here too he was soon noted for his extraordinary powers of memory, so much so that he was summoned to Rome by Pope Pius V to discuss his remarkable system of mnemonics or memory training.

Bruno's preoccupation with the writings of Erasmus, and his love of disputing accepted beliefs, soon led him into trouble. Hearing that an indictment had been drawn up against him, he fled from the monastery, at the same time abandoning his monastic habit. This hasty decision had far-reaching consequences, for it cut him off from any hope of reconciliation with the Catholic Church.

On the Run

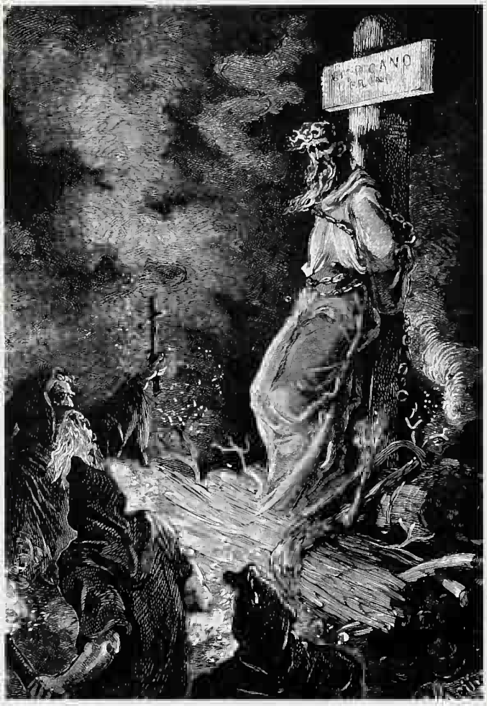
In 1579, in the course of the wandering life to which he was henceforth condemned, Bruno reached Calvinist Geneva, where he was persuaded by the Marchese de Vico to abandon the monastic habit for good. His hopes of liberty and security were shattered when he indiscreetly exposed 20 mistakes, which he declared had been made in a single lecture by one of the most prominent local professors.

Threatened with reprisals, Bruno made his way to Paris, supporting himself by teaching. His lectures were so successful that King Henri III sent for him to discover whether his marvellous memory was natural or was achieved with the aid of magic. Bruno based his memory devices on those expounded by Raymond Lull, the 13th century Spanish mystic philosopher; they involved the use of geometric symbols, figures, circles and tables (see LULL).

In spite of royal patronage Bruno felt obliged to move on at the approach of the religious wars in France, and decided to go to England (the historian John Bossy has produced persuasive evidence that he was sent to England as a spy). The atmosphere in Elizabethan London was sympathetic to refugees from all over Europe, and especially to Italians. These years (1583-85), which were spent in comparative safety at the house of the French Ambassador, Michel de Castelnau, were to be his most rewarding. He was introduced to the fashionable circles of intellectuals; he met and discussed his ideas with such eminent scholars of the day as Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Fulke Greville. Indeed, his stay in England was marred by only one unpleasant incident, during a short visit to Oxford, where the dons evidently took exception to his theories and to his bombastic manner. Bruno, angered by his reception referred to his critics as 'the herald of the idol of Obscurity and the bailiff of the goddess of Presumption'.

The Infinite Universe

Ever since leaving Naples Bruno had supported himself by writing, lecturing and publishing. Now in London, encouraged by de Castelnau and others, he began to put his unorthodox views on cosmology and philosophy down on paper. In his work *Ash Wednesday Supper* of 1584, Bruno introduces his readers to the Copernican theory of the universe; he states, contrary to accepted Church tradition, that the sun is the centre of the cosmos. For centuries it had been believed that the universe consisted of a finite series of concentric spheres with the earth, motionless, at its centre. Bruno was one of the earliest to realize that the universe must be of infinite extent, incorporating innumerable worlds, and he expounds this fully in his book entitled *On the Infinite Universe and Worlds*, published later in 1584.



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Giordano Bruno was burned alive at Rome in 1600 as 'an impertinent and pertinaceous heretic'; both his scepticism in religion and his belief in magic contributed to his condemnation

Bruno maintains that just as men regard the earth as the central point of the universe, about which everything revolves, so too beings on other worlds such as the sun and the moon believe that they are the focal point of their universe. He divides the worlds into two categories: the suns and the earths or planets – each dependent on the other for its existence. The earths rotate round the suns, but the suns too are continually moving. Behind all movement he envisaged a world soul or spirit, manifesting itself even in inanimate objects such as plants and stones. The individual soul, Bruno believed, could through wisdom, reason and love, rise higher and higher to eventual unity with God.

Bruno was also interested in the magical arts. He compared them to a sword which can be used ill in the hands of a wicked person, but which, correctly manipulated by a God-fearing man, can produce much good. He lists ten different kinds of magic which can be employed to this end. They include natural and sympathetic magic, as well as invocation of the dead (necromancy) and of demonic powers. He advocates mathematical magic, involving the use of figures, characters, words and numbers.

A very impractical man, Bruno was quite incapable of foreseeing the conclusions which would be drawn from his bold statements, especially by his enemies. He worked quickly and his pupil Eglin has left us a description of him 'standing on one leg and dictating as fast as the pen could follow'. He published no less than 61 books on philosophy, the art of memory, geometry and other subjects.

Leaving England in 1585, he spent the next six years visiting European centres of learning, and in particular those in Germany. Finally in 1591 he accepted an invitation from a Venetian nobleman named Giovanni Mocenigo to go to Venice and instruct him in 'the art of memory and invention'. Whether Mocenigo intended to lure Bruno into a trap or whether he was merely dissatisfied with his teaching, is uncertain; but in 1592 he denounced him to the Inquisition and Bruno was put in the jail of the Holy Office on a charge of heresy.

Burnt at the Stake

Although he had never given any overt sign of intending to break with the Church, it had been said of him – even in tolerant England – that he was a man of no religion. Indeed, one of the Inquisition's minor charges against him was that he had published extravagant praises of the heretic Queen Elizabeth I. From very early on, however, he had sought to be reconciled to the Church, on condition that he did not have to return to the monastic life.

In 1593 Bruno was transferred to the dungeons of the Inquisition at Rome. When he refused, after long interrogation, to retract any of his philosophical opinions, he was finally condemned as 'an impenitent and pertinacious heretic' and was publicly burned at the stake in the Campo dei Fiori in Rome on 17 February 1600.

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